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editor's idea

This is the first Sunday after Christmas, and I am leaning on a bar next to Roy Rogers. Despite the fact that the bar is located in Blackpool on the North West coast of the United Kingdom on the eve of 1998, Roy (not his real name, you understand) is dressed like a Hollywood cowboy circa 1955: outsize stetson, fringed fringed tasseled shocking pink shirt, elaborately holstered six-shooter and all. The only sign that Roy is a fake of a fake, as it were, are his jeans: black Levi's, a strictly, and as it happens, not-necessary-at-all thank-you-very-much 80s variant on what I believe is known in the rag trade as 'a design class'.

Besides Roy and myself, there are approximately 400 other people in this bar, most of whom appear to have been time-warped in from the same universe as Roy, dressed as they are like extras from *Seven Brides For Seven Brothers*. Actually, I should explain that this bar is not really a bar at all, but a beer hall built into the rear of the famous 'balloon room' that is situated at the foot of Blackpool's Tarnish sub-Eiffel Tower, and the reason for my companions' somewhat disconcerting collective garb is that we have all paid out five pounds to attend the second afternoon of The Fylde Coast International Festival of Country Music and Line Dancing.

Blackpool might be characterised as a tacky seaside postcard kind of a town, a low rent Las Vegas, but I bet even the vulgar burghers of Vegas would be proud of the Tower Ballroom, a vast, vaulted cathedral of kitsch complete with gold leafed chandeliers and seraphim haunting the rafters, and a colossal stage backdrop which depicts a mythical (and in my fevered imagination) unicorn-and-troll infested landscape straight out of a Terry Pratchett novel. I do believe it's the best building I've ever entered.

Now, at this juncture, some of you might well be asking what the hell any of this has got to do with The Wire? Good point, and let's hope I can make one before I reach the end of the column.

Believe it or not, in my head a connection seems to be forming between the above scenario and the Sonic Youth record (yep, that's record as in LP, vinyl-fans) that is playing in the background on heavy rotation as I

type. The record is *Goo*, recorded in 1990 after the group had agonised away their souls to David Geffen Inc, or so their hardcore fans in grubby indie land would have you believe. That means *Goo* has been generally erased from da official VFO canon, but for the record, the first side, I have just decided, kicks ass like side one of The Stooges' *Funhouse*, causing an exhilarating rush of blood to the body parts that other more recent music I have been listening to this month just didn't reach. It helps, of course, that the opening track on *Goo*, 'Dirty Boots', is a thinly-veiled homage to *Funhouse*'s 'Loose', which, apropos Peter Shapiro's Epiphany in *The Wire* 167, is the greatest riff of all time.

Back in Blackpool Tower Ballroom, I am translated by the sight of maybe 200 line dancers swarming like insects in perfect synchronicity across a dancefloor about half the size of a football pitch, as the 'record caller' (DJ) just doesn't seem the right phrase (somehow) cues up what I can only describe as a minuscule-encrusted version of Will Smith's 'Men In Black'. (I wonder what the good ole boys down at the Grand Ole Opry made of that one?)

Now in the case of 'Men In Black', I am not about to recommend such a crass instance of corporate cross-platform marketing synergy, not even a Country & Western variant thereof, but isn't this what music is all about, I appear to be asking myself? A functional, social tool, loosening the coils of collective pleasure centres? It's years since I watched it, but I seem to recall that Sonic Youth's *Goo* video features a barroom scene, with the group's performance shunted off to one side of the camera's eye, which instead lingers over the casual interactions of a group of small town youth, a scenario and memory which sends me spinning back to my afternoon in Blackpool Tower Ballroom.

But here's where I get confused (hey! you clue!) I wonder how many of my fellow line dancers would appreciate the sound of detuned, over-amped electric guitars? And how many Sonic Youth fans would have lasted five minutes at The Fylde Coast International Festival of Country Music and Line Dancing? Am I a dilettante, or is every one else just upst? **TONY HERRINGTON**

The March issue of *The Wire*

More rip-roaring reports from the frontline of New Music.

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letters

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Jailhouse rocker

Now I am no longer 'detained at Her Majesty's pleasure', I want to let you know that a regular high point of my incarceration was reading *The Wire* every month. I don't think I ever learned any issue by heart but I certainly read every word, sometimes a number of times. Although rabidly enthusiastic about music, I always thought of music magazines as representing all that was either most trivial or most dull in our society, but, at least in recent times, *The Wire* has been great, demonstrating that you don't have to be an idiot to like music. I particularly enjoy your Letters page and the monthly whinges from egos bruised by Ben Watson. He gets up so many noses he must be doing something right. Personally, I like his stuff. Apart from the fact that he mostly likes what I like (the definition of a good critic), his opinions are clear and unambiguous and he has a consistent point of view. And even when he knocks something, he's interesting. Unusual, that. Often music writers express their disapproval by sneaky remarks or lash out at all and sundry and descend into an incoherent rant. But the only complaints I have are that *The Wire* should be longer and come out more often. **Tony** address supplied

They've all got it infamy!

I don't know if Ben Watson is trying to gain infamy by joining the long, undistinguished list of critics who have dismissed major talents at first hearing, or whether he has simply listened to so much over-loud stuff that he can no longer hear anything less than 200 dB, but his puldown of the new Eddie Prevost *Two CD Touch* (*The Wire* 167) is like Tony Blair writing about socialism.

Quite simply, Tom Chant and John Edwards are two of the finest musicians to arrive on the scene for many years. It is obvious that Chant has heard Evan Parker (and perhaps Trevor Watts in his SME period), but this, his debut CD, reveals that he has already discovered his own voice and is a very fluent and inventive player. I was stunned when I first heard him (at the CD launch) and look forward to hearing much more of him. For the last year or so, Edwards has been revealing himself to be the outstanding new bass player on the scene, particularly in his work with Evan Parker, and this CD is another fine example of his fresh approach.

The Two, both live and on this CD, works beautifully together — so much so that one does not have to make any allowances for two members being relatively young. I think it is wrong to compare this music with that of Morton Feldman (which I do not enjoy) — a better companion would be with the relentless dialectic of the SME (real hardcore improvisation that Watson does not enjoy). This is a somewhat new area of exploration for Prevost — different from both APIM and from the groups he has previously led. Not all saxophone/bass/drums trios have to be excruciatingly loud, thank goodness.

It is not really for me to comment on Richard Cook's review of two Emarcym CDs (same issue) — after all, an Emarcym review in *The Wire* is a very rare occurrence — except to point out that Julie Tippet(s) does not appear in ISKRA 1912, whereas Norma Winstone does.

Martin Davidson Emarcym Records, London

Divided we stand

As I've grown more and more familiar (and no less fondler) with this magazine, I've come to realise that there is an awkward break/breach between the happy hype of the features and the very serious and sober levelheadedness of the Soundcheck reviews. Personally I pay most attention to the latter, although I do read *The Wire* in its entirety, preferably back to front. This rift wouldn't be of great consequence, if only much of the music blown out of all proportions in the main body weren't so mercilessly destroyed at the back. It is furthermore surprising considering the fact that the same group of contributors are responsible for both sections. Why sing the praise of something that'll get the axe a couple of dozen pages away? This state of affairs simply does you a disservice. You put the reader in a tight spot (s/he must decide between playing down the importance of the artists featured (and very likely ignoring their work), or putting into question the reliability of the reviews. Just a thought.

Gusna Ponsalva New Haven, USA

Cross-channel connections

I have just checked the current issue your website is improving month by month! I think that drawing links (eg Talk Talk and Mongolian singing in the same issue) from articles is a very good idea for curious people like me. And please let Peter Shapiro know that his

Epiphany (*The Wire* 167) was read and enjoyed by at least one person.

Christophe Romagne via e-mail

Age of enlightenment

Your publication has been an epiphany of sorts. Together with David Toop's *Ocean of Sound*, you have challenged my fundamental assumptions about music, making connections I never knew existed while destroying needless boundaries that had been erected for me (as someone who hadn't yet escaped the grips of the *Rolling Stone* magazine canon approach to the music).

As someone whose formative years were shaped by Krautrock, then punk, Industrial (Throbbing Gristle, Current 93, Nurse With Wound), indie rock and finally by HipHop and World Music, I have always been interested in questions about the act of creation, issues of appropriation, the cult of personality and the whole DIY aesthetic.

However, while I have always been a fan of Techno and improvised jazz, I hadn't been aware of the issues of colour and technology in House music, or had been confronted about the difference between improvised music and improvisation.

While I find some of your categories (post-rock and Electronic) too reductive and confined, nonetheless each issue of *The Wire* continues to illuminate and always provokes intense discussion between myself and my peers. And in the end isn't that what you want from a magazine such as yours?

Richard Moute Ontario, Canada

Age of responsibility

After five years of subscribing to your magazine, I sometimes pause to reflect on how far it has shaped my musical tastes over the years. The staff in my local Virgin Megastore now know to hide whenever I enter with a list of things that I would like to order. I don't visit London regularly, but when I made a pilgrimage to the Rough Trade shop, the racks were filled with stuff that I've only ever read about: artists like Nurse With Wound or Blusian Of Safety and so on. It was like a monthly review section in *The Wire*, but within my grasp. Of course, I left without buying anything. There was too much choice.

It also made me reassess the position of music and the buying of it in my life. As a family man with extra financial responsibilities, I can't spend anything like the

Dead letter office

At last you have recognised the genre-defying appeal of *The Grateful Dead* (The Wire 166). I was glad to see your Primer on one of the finest groups the USA has produced. I believe that although they are no more, their music is still relevant today. Their influence is discernible in bands as diverse as Ministry (check their version of the Dead's 'Friend Of The Devil'), and Spiritualized, as well as a multitude of US guitar groups too numerous to mention.

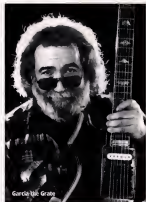
One thing Bibo Kopf did not mention was the links *The Grateful Dead* had with jazz and improvisation. As we all know, Ornette Coleman, Charles Lloyd, David Murray and Branford Marsalis have all played live with the Dead or appeared on recordings by them, or, in Murray's case, have recorded Dead compositions. Perhaps this could be the subject of another feature!

Further, I am glad to see your continuing support of the increasingly prolific John Fahey.

Mark Pithie Aberdeen

Bibo Kopf a Deadhead? Fudhead, more like. So much is Kopf on establishing his hip credentials by focusing on *The Grateful Dead*'s undeniably great 60s stuff, he insists on overlooking the qualities of their later music. For instance, how a Dead article could claim to be a Dead Primer without mentioning Dick's Picks Volume Three is beyond me. Except it is a live recording from 1977 and is arguably the best of all Dick's picks to date, so its inclusion would obviously contradict Kopf's shortsighted notions about the Dead being good only three years at the tail-end of the 60s. Stick to writing about clipped-out Krauts, Kopf. Then nobody will notice your petty prejudices and serious errors of judgement.

C Jones Sheffield



Garcia, the Grate

Thanks for printing Bibo Kopf's *Grateful Dead* Primer. It's nice to see someone taking a fair and unbiased approach to this most maligned and misunderstood of bands. As someone who's been listening to the Dead for 12 years or so, I regard myself as being familiar with most aspects of their music, but Bibo's article had me hearing new things in Dead albums that I've been listening to for years.

The fact that you can produce interesting, literate articles about the likes of the Dead, Harpirasid Chaurasia and Alec Empire all in the same issue speaks volumes about the continued quality and diversity of *The Wire*. Here's hoping you can keep it up. At the moment the magazine is light years ahead of the competition, and is for me the only music magazine worth buying.

Neil Hussey Cheshire

Heavenly thoughts

In his review of Samara Celestial's *Cosmic Gold Millennium* (The Wire 166) David Keenan writes: "Samara Celestial has been an Arkestra member for some time now (though Robert Campbell makes no mention of him in his, er, 'exhaustive' *Earthly Recordings Of Sun Ra* discography)." This attempt to write him out of history is erroneous, as I am glad to report that Eric 'Samara Celestial' Walker appears in at least 411 entries.

Sadly, Samara recently passed away, on 23 November, 1997, five days short of turning 43. Originally from Savannah, Georgia, his first instrument was the trumpet, and later he taught himself to play drums. He moved to Atlanta, where he played with Duke Pearson, Life Force and ZZ Hill, among others. He was the first drummer with The Teller Jazz Society, a group formed by trombonist Teddy Adams and bassist

Ben Tucker. Later, in New Orleans, he played with, most notably, Alvin Batiste, Ellis Marsalis and David Murray. But it was his meeting with Sun Ra that changed his life — and his name.

Samara first met Sun Ra when he was auditioning for a new drummer. The leader did not like anyone. "Give your number to Marshall, give your number to Gilmore," he was saying. But seeing Samara, even before he knew he played drums, Sun Ra said something like "You're a drummer, give me your number!" At home asleep after a late night gig two weeks later, Samara is woken by Sun Ra on the phone. "Why are you not here?" he asks. "There has been a plane ticket waiting for you for two weeks." "I don't know," Samara replies. "I see there is a lot I have to teach you," says Sun Ra.

So began a spiritual awakening and musical odyssey for the next 18 years. Sun Ra advanced his knowledge of drumming, and Samara became a fine polyrhythmic drummer, capable of playing both free and straight, and appeared on many recordings, most notably the unique Sun Ra no LP *Black Spirit Dance* (1979), which Robert Campbell does omit from Samara. Also played with Arkestra member Michael Ray's Cosmic Krew, and recorded two CDs of his own. He was also a very good pianist and could play most of Sun Ra's compositions.

After talking with him at length about Ra's philosophy, this listener thought he would one day lead the Arkestra. He will be missed.

Mark Greenwood Leamington Spa

No Leeway

Regarding Will Montgomery's review of Lee Perry's discs (The Wire 166), wake up! Mr Perry's more recent work, namely *Tenement*, is not inferior to the Black Ark stuff, but different. His genius manifests itself in different ways. What Montgomery took for "banal rhymes and self-dramatising mantras" and "self-parody to the nth degree" is actually Mr Perry's wizzy wisdom. It passes me off to have him insulted by someone without ears who's stuck in the 70s. Free your mind, or let someone who understands good music write about him. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Anon via e-mail

Corrections

Issue 167 The Epiphanes photograph of Black Sabbath should have been credited to Redfords. John McLaughlin's keyboard player on *The Holy Of Things* is Jim Beard, not Chris Chambers. The Phylx disc *Contra La Puerta* on the Invisible label is distributed through Plastic Head, not Caroline. The Phylx and Pacific labels are distributed through SRO, not Cargo or Vital. Issue 166 The Red Recommended book and CD package *Unfused: Music Under New Technology* costs £16 for the set, or £11 for the book or CD only, not £11 per set, as stated in *Print Run*. Issue 165 The correct title of the Bergman/Brazova/Brotzman disc is *Eight By Three* not *Eight By Three* as written. It is distributed through Cadillac. □

amount I used to on indulging my passion. I've also found that some of the stuff I have bought doesn't live up to the expectation fostered by the review. My projection of the music from the description of it can be as pleasurable as the thing itself, and I've enjoyed reading reviews in the knowledge that I was unlikely ever to buy the music.

It is the beginning of a slide towards a state of responsibility, where musicians like Alec Empire seem increasingly irrelevant to someone like me? Where a CD by Morisana now seems like one part brilliance, nine parts emperor's new clothes? Where the melancholy of Sina Nordenskiöld becomes one of the few things that I can listen to when I'm washing the dishes while my wife bathes the kids? Am I merely consumerist and voyeuristic? Or just becoming older and ready to subscribe to Q?

John Gough Coventry

soundings

february

Festivals/Special Events

AMPI with Corinna Cardew (right), 1994-95



Improvisation: Tradition And

Innovation Eddie Prevost participates in a rare staging of his former AMPI colleague, the late Corinna Cardew's *Protest* (6 February), as part of a three-day festival exploring the relationship between improvisation and composition, as epitomised by Cardew's "graphic score for improvisation". The score will be projected on screen during the performance by The Continuum Ensemble, which also features Paul Rutherford (trombone). The concert also features sound diffuser Danj Rumsack's piece for tape and improvisation, and Paul Rutherford solo. The Cardew night is bookended by festival director Douglas Finch's solo piano improvisations (5), and *Theme And Variations* (7), in which against Naj Haik, pianist, John Law, Rebeck, Finch and others improvise on a theme composed by Jim McQueen. Additional events include Hakim's organ masterpiece (7, 10:30-12:30pm) and Rutherford's live improvisation workshop (8, noon-2pm, London College of Music and Media, Renshaw Road, W5). Concerts (all 7:30pm, £6/3.50 concs) and all other events at St Giles Church, Croydon, EC2, information and tickets: 0181 3615281

SoundArt 99 Another capital event dedicated to "Composition, improvisation, Electronics" over the same three days (5-7 February). Its highlights include New Complexity composer Ben Fennelly's rarely performed *Time And Motion Study II* (for cello, throat mic, delay tapes, modulation and extensive amplification), Hans Debusse's pioneering tape piece *Symptoms No 1*, the debut of wind improvising trio Paul Rutherford/John Butcher/Chris Marshall, and a table, electronics

and voice improvisation by Ansuman Bhowik. The bill is as follows: workshop/improvisations by James Oliver, Shihui Lee, Morton Feldman, John White, Phil Durant and Kingston (5); Fennelly's *Time And Motion Study* (5); Bhowik, Fennelly's *Henry Cow* and the wind trio (6), and pianist Chris Burn performing nine Cowell compositions, Orlan Davidson, Kazuo Fukushima, and various improv combinations of Vervyn Weston, Vioriste Hachness and John Butcher (7). All concerts 7:30pm at London Conway Hall, WC1, £6/4 concs, £10 season ticket, information 0181 740 1349

Fairplay 1999 Ten upcoming and leading improvisers swap notes at North London's own free music explosion over two days (21-22 February). Featuring an equal balance of male and female musicians, they are John Bisset (guitar), Gal Brand (trombone), Phil Durant (sax), Amy Garmen (sax), Caroline Kraabel (sax), Phlegm Nicolls (cello), Evan Porter (sax), Mark Sanders (horn), Assad Wore (bass) and Vervyn Weston (guitar). They'll be performing in various duo, trio and larger combinations over three performances: At the Library Gallery, Edwards Lane, Stoke Newington, N16 (21, 8pm), and the Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road, N7 (22, 4pm and 8pm), £6/4 concs, £9/6 two concerts, £12/18 three concerts. In addition, Nicolls and Kraabel run a workshop, 21, 3:30-5:30pm, also at the Library Gallery, £5/3, 0171 607 7364

The School Of Sound 4 our day symposium investigating the art of soundtracks is now open for enrolment. The main sessions, editing and post-production sound, why have music with images?, multimedia and animation

Selected highlights of the month's live events, happenings, club spaces and broadcasts

Its starry cast of panellists includes Oscar-winning editor/sound designer Walter Murch (*Apocalypse Now*), directors The Quay Brothers (Street Of Crocodiles), Mike Hodges and Laura Mulvey, composers Simon Fisher Turner, Stephen Deuchar and Julian Nott, film theorist and composer Michel Chion, sound recordist Chris Watson (see *How To Live*), av-cabaret (Voltaire), ECM boss Manfred Eicher, and writers/publishers Ian Christie, Jan Wozniak (Touch) and Christopher Yip. David Lynch will also be taking part as a specially videotaped interview, while director Gillo Pontecorvo and composers Brian Eno and Anne Dudley are listed but not yet confirmed. Coinciding with the symposium, the National Film Theatre will be running a sound-related film season, and Battersea Arts Centre are planning a series of theatrical performances in complete darkness. People are advised to book early, for places are extremely limited. London Institute Français, South Kensington, SW7, 16-19 April, 8am-6pm, £375/150 for students (both plus VAT), 0171 586 3056

Chast Doves Babylon An exhibition of David Hendry's recently rediscovered photographic documenting reggae culture in Kingston, Jamaica between 1977-79. London Blue Note Gallery, 1 Hudson Square, N1, 6 February-29 March, 10pm, Sun-Fri, free

Bedroom Politics Belgium multimedia Techno show, staged by Incident, "that draws attention to the use and abuse of everyday electronics", while sitting up the hacker's paradise of the bedroom as "the interclass enlightenment par excellence". As well as films, videos and games, music from OHR's Christoph De Babalon, Que's Markus Popo, Belgian DJs Ciel and Low, and Voice Crack. Ghent Vorst, Sint-Petersnieuwstraat 23, Ghent, Belgium, 26 February, 8pm, 00 32 2 2239585

Art, Glass & Cognition Writer/contributor Ben Watson teams up with Derek Bailey for a second round of academic, jazz and guitar improvisation to promote his new book, seductively subtitled *Quantaumcognitive*. Concerning Materialist Escher, London Philly McHugh's Whisky Cafe, 68 Arwell Street, Brighton, EC1, 17 February, 8:30pm, free

On Stage

Denise Bovell The legendary reggae/bud performer and producer. London Jazz Cafe, 5 Parkway, Camden, NW1, 22 February, 10:30-8, 0171 344 0044

Terry Galtier The cult American folk-jazz

singer-songwriter (see Soundcheck) appears at Manchester Band On The Wall, Swan St, 5 February, 18:30/7:50, and London Jazz Cafe, 5 Parkway, Camden, NW1, 11 February, £12.50/5.10, 0171 344 0044

Julian Cope For his first solo tour, this month's Invisible Jukebox subject (see page 36) goes out under the banner "An Audience With The Cope", with £10m million joined poet Murray Lachlan Young supporting. Wolverhampton Wulfrun Hall (11 February), Cambridge Junction (20), Sheffield Leadmill (3), Bristol Barterfield (4), Cardiff Coal Exchange (6), Liverpool L2 (7), Edinburgh Assembly Rooms (9), Glasgow Arches (10), Manchester University MCH (11), Leeds Irish Centre (12), London Academy (14, 15) & 10 in advance, £12 London

Ozham Fitkin with The New Ensemble and in a piano duo with Ruth Wall. Manchester Royal Northern College Of Music, 124 Oxford Road, 17 February, 7:30pm, £4/5.50, 0161 807 5279

Egberto Gismonti The Brazilian guitarist and pianist performs solo and with the chamber ensemble Electro Strings at Bristol Cathedral (18 February), 01225 464387, Brighton Sallis Benney Theatre (19, 01273 709709/764301), 01800 881100 (20, 0171 560 4201/4242), Charingcross Great Hall (22), 01803 325073

Mats Gustafsson The Swedish saxophonist on tour in a trio with Pat Thomas and Roger Turner at Derby Montague Gallery (25 February), London Klinker at The Sussex, 107A Colford Road, N1 (27), Oxford (28), information 0181 442 4381

Marcocannia + Rachel Devine First time out in London for these Scots comic rockers (see *Teatime*). London Upstairs at the Garage, 11 February, 14:00, 0171 609 1818

Paul Mariani Trio with Joe Lovano and Bill Fickel in concert with Kenny Wheeler/John Kendrick/Steve and David Holland. Birmingham Adnan Bouli Hall, Paradise Place, 20 February, 8pm, £9/15, 0121 236 5622, and London Barbican, Silk Street, EC2, 21 February, 7:30pm, £17/50-7/10, 0171 638 5403

Pizza + Electroscopio + Mount Vernon Arts Lab New Wave singers Phone head off this London end night hosted by the small but perfectly formed Worcester Jukebox label (see London Upstairs at the Garage, 12 February, 8pm, 0171 609 1818)

US Maple The Beehavan post-rockers' European tour reaches London (venue tbc, 14

global ear

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month . . .



Havana

Les Van Van

Standing in a Havana nightclub and waiting for the salsa group Pachito Alonso Y Su Kini Kini to start playing, I am surrounded by 'lovely young ladies' dressed in their 'top gear' and ready to suck the dollars out of their mostly middle-aged male partners — tourists from Italy, Spain and elsewhere in the Western world.

Only five minutes' walking distance from the club lies the Plaza de la Revolución. Right at its heart is the giant portrait of Che Guevara, constructed out of iron and neon in the time before the revolution stalled. Today, the state of the Cuban economy doesn't beam so brightly, and it's certainly not strong as steel.

People old enough to remember the way things were ten years ago — before the decline of the Soviet empire and the American blockade impacted on the domestic economy — dwell in memories of the good old times, when the majority of the population was remarkably well off, and enjoyed the benefits of free education and a high standard of healthcare. Back

then, the country was flowering with cultural activities, like the giant carnival held on Malecon — Havana's ocean promenade — every summer. But now the promenade is lined with prostitutes plying for trade from the passing cars, and men trying to sell cigars, drugs or tourist rooms to foreigners.

Nevertheless, Fidel Castro and his team are working hard to retain those hard-won health and education benefits. They even find the money to spend on theatre, film festivals and other cultural pursuits.

But the government attempt to clear the streets of prostitution and other illegal activities has backfired. It has effectively turned Cuba into a police state, and in trying to take over the black market in foreign currency by legalising use of the US dollar, it has turned the majority of the Cuban population into second class citizens in their own country. Large parts of Havana now resemble a crumbling ghost town, and in the poorest sections of town, housing conditions are appalling.

Meanwhile, inside the nightclub, the Cubans who have managed either to pay the ten dollar cover or to blag their way in don't seem too worried about the state of the economy. When Pachito Alonso Y Su Kini Kini — a typical 12 piece salsa formation with brass section and lots of percussion — starts playing, the energy level of group and audience alike rises 100 per cent from the very first note, and stays that way for the next two hours.

It's hard to describe the impact of the stabbing combinations of precisely arranged brass and off-beat percussion. I am impressed and surprised, for on CD Pachito Alonso Y Su Kini Kini sound dull. Cuban producers typically sprinkle too much sugar on top of the music and seem to delight in the kind of Yamaha factory sound that only musos and second rate romantics go for — at least in Europe. But live is another matter. On stage, studio artificiality gives way to the rawness of their purer live sound. The mix of musicality and professionalism even in this fairly typical group is astonishing.

Once the groups leave the stage, the DJs always do their best to play any slences with disco of the '70s your Barbie girl in a Barbie world' kind. In Cuban discos it seems people can't get enough of the kitschy end of House and Techno. Yet unlike some Europeans, who celebrate kitsch inside inverted commas, the Cubans take it straight, commencing 'muy lindo' (very beautiful) and meaning it.

One of the more interesting Cuban groups are the five piece male rap group SBS. Working with a rhythm machine, they mix salsa, HipHop and regga, and chant their hyper-sexed ultra-commercial Spanish lyrics on top. The effect on their audience — especially the mostly female contingent thronging the first three rows — is staggering. The two rise the crowd to a level of ecstasy in the time-honoured style of feeding them half the lyrics and getting the fans to scream back the rest.





Though they have appeared on a few compilations, they have yet to make an album of their own.

Presently, all time greats like Los Van Van aside, the top group in Havana are La Charanga Habanera. They are the **only** salsa group I came across who incorporate some kind of streetwise reflection — criticism, even — of the current state of things. Though it's all very mild by Anglo-American standards, it's enough to rub the official socialist ideology up the wrong way. In fact they're presently banned, apparently because the singer partly undressed himself on stage and made some remarks about marijuana (highly illegal in Cuba). I particularly like their love song of sorts, called "Hagamos Un Chén," which points out that women should be paid in any relationship, preferably in cash. It's dedicated to all tourists visiting Cuba.

Despite the inroads of rap and HipHop, salsa is still the most popular music in Cuba. Other top acts are Mandolin — "el médico de la salsa" — who convincingly delivers very effective brass and chant hooklines, despite his corny lyrics and an all too slick new guy image. For a more progressive sound, try Barboles, a salsa outfit featuring two shaved-headed women. Another contemporary top act, Paulito Y Su Elite, have an inexplicable local reputation for expressing the mood on the street, but to me Paulito just sounds too slick.

As yet these groups haven't worked out a way of capturing their energy on disc, but live they really get the house rocking. Besides, most people have come to watch as much as to dance, not alone but in couples, in a very sensual Cuban salsa style called "Casino." Watching them dance makes us Europeans, who like to express our individuality by hopping up and down alone in the dry ice fog of some club, look like very sad creatures

But, salsa is not all this remarkable town has to offer. Most everyone you meet is a musician of one kind or another, and while strolling through residential areas you might hear Samena chanting and drumming emanating from doorways. This Afro-Christian form of ritual, dance and music has survived a century of upheaval, and its believers, traditionally dressed all in white, can be regularly seen in the streets.

Cubans love their music and their cultural heritage. Dozens of groups keep up the tradition of Cuban Son

— the basis of modern salsa — while Afro-Cuban folklore groups like Balanga Sonor constantly update their repertoire, sung in the Yoruba language of their African ancestors. It's not uncommon to see a small rumba ensemble, dressed in the latest HipHop fashion, executing well choreographed modern dance moves.

The rumba/Samena group Otba Y Lu, employ a blindfolded virtuoso dancer to promenade with a bottle of rum safely between his legs. In all, the Cuban interpretation of the word "folklore" takes on an invigorating meaning far removed from the lifeless afterstate European folklore groups leave in the mouth.

Electronic music, understandably, is not a fertile territory in Cuba. For economic reasons, anybody with a keyboard plus integrated sequencer software acts a bit like God. The unassuming Santes, on the other hand, attempt a tasteless "progressive" integration of Yoruba music with high culture and jazzed up, late 70s soul rock. You're better off listening to a good old, handmade Cuban trash Metal group, complete with low, grumbling vocals, like Tendencia, from the small town Pinar del Río.

Jungledrum 'n' bass generally hasn't reached Cuba, but there's a strong HipHop and Spanish language rap scene (in fact, nobody speaks English). The lack of studio and recording equipment leads to local rappers using often bland US backing tracks. However, the new girl rap trio Atracción, who tackle anything from feminism to love relationships, are part of a growing opposition to the established salsa circuit.

HOLGER HILLER

Atracción



Req Urban beat decay

In the search for a British strain of HipHop, many devotees have settled on the jump-up Jungle of London's Aphrodite and DJ Hype as one solution. Amid the crackling paint and tatty charm of Brighton, however, a lone individual called Req is developing a more intriguing, and possibly more 'British', twist on beat construction.

Req's resolutely lo-fi, four-track ruminations on HipHop and Electronica seem to be inspired by the sight of the south coast town's crumbling West Pier floating phantom-like on a bed of fog. Rather than using the attenuated and enervated drum loops of DJ Vadim, Req's explorations of decay sound like the bedrock foundation of HipHop being buffeted by gusts of sea mist and covered in a layer of carcinogenic chip grease. "I don't think there can really be a HipHop scene outside of the place it was born," reasons Req, whose estranged activities as a graffiti artist necessitates his operating under an alias. "I think that music is made from its environment and the conditions at the time. I don't think people realise how much geographic location and climate effects the things they do. In a way, we are trying to make the conditions to produce our own HipHop, but really we've got our own form of music that would grow naturally out of our environment, but we're so busy chasing America or whatever that we don't allow our own thing to happen."

Judging by the working process he adopted for his second album *Frequency Jams* (his first was last year's *One*), Req lets the music grow naturally. "Usually, I'll start with one element and that will suggest the next thing that should go with it," he explains. "Basically, a track will suggest itself from the first thing that is put there until the thing has reached its conclusion. I'm building it, not by deliberately putting things in certain places, but just allowing it to do the natural thing. It's almost as if I'm not actually part of the process... Putting out an album is as much for me as it is for the people who listen to it because it helps me understand what is happening, because I don't know what is happening as much as anyone else. I'm learning as I go along."

The result of this almost Taoist method of construction is music that epitomises what The Wire's Sasha Freese-Jones terms 'the click'. Relating as much to the new wave swingbeat of producer Timbaland as it does to the militant minimalism of Panasonic, 'the click' is the embodiment of a trend that has seen rhythm removed from its traditional function of providing momentum.

"On the second album I started sampling anything," Req says, responding to a question about the idea of rhythm as texture. "On one track the beat is made from the Moog, just finding sticky noises and things like that, bloop... it's almost inevitable, I think, especially as technology is getting cleaner and you can buy all sorts of drum sounds on discs. It's so easy

to make a 'proper sounding' drum beat, so it's a reaction almost to all of the technology. Thinking back to when the first album was made, there was an initial idea of treating the beats in looped sections and trying to draw texture out of the original break, so that the beats themselves had more life than where they were sampled from, more history or, yeah, texture. In a way, it made the groove more sustaining that there was more stuff for you to see in it, rather than just making a swingy beat or whatever."

With its grotty timbres and congested atmospheres, *Frequency Jams* feels like a meditation on compression and pollution in a fashion similar to his work as a graffiti artist, it makes an art form out of the dismal conditions of everyday life. "The relationship between the painting that I do and the sound is all in the frequencies," he says. "There's sound frequencies obviously and colour frequencies and light. Everything can be broken down to frequencies: the density of air, the density of solid matter and the varying degrees in between. It leads me to feel that everything is the same, even though we always tell ourselves that everything is different. Traditionally in graffiti they tend to fill everything up with as much detail as possible and write in all the gaps so that no one else can get a chance to get in there. In a way there's an influence from that. I think that can be quite overpowering, which is what I'm interested in. You can obviously offset that with space and play with colour or whatever. I think that what inspires me really in music is the solidness and density of the beats and then finding its opposite to float with it. Get the balance right." **PETER SHAPIRO** *Frequency Jams* is released this month on Sant (through Vito).

Uri Caine Caining the classics

Orthodoxy has it that eclecticism is not to be trusted. It leads to a shallow dilettantism, and no matter how brilliant an artist's technique, spreading your talent across a range of styles ultimately bespeaks a lack of commitment.

But such blinkered thinking fails to take into account the simple human desire for a change of diet. Nor can it explain the explosion of difference exemplified by New York's downtown scene, where artists like pianist Uri Caine successfully run parallel projects exploring the interfaces of contemporary classical, Jewish folklore and down-the-line jazz without any one style compromising the integrity of others.

"There are certain personalities who are down on the whole idea of eclecticism," agrees Caine in a voice a few octaves lower than Lee Marvin's, over the telephone from a Vermont hotel. "But it can be a positive thing, there's just so much stuff out there, so many musical questions to be resolved."

The long-distance piano player, who has recently



released two excellent albums of post-classical recordings of Mahler (*Arrival Light*) and Wagner (*Wagner E Verano*). In Vermont on tour with Don Byron's Bug Music, playing 40s Duke Ellington songs and the cartoon music of Raymond Scott. In addition, he has been recording with trumpeter Dave Douglas's group, as well as completing his own new jazz album — his third — this time with his trio. In other words, Cane is part of a growing number of artists prepared to burst orthodox constraints to work through all of their enthusiasms.

"There's the whole cultural-political side, which says certain musicians should not be playing this or that," Cane continues. "But some of us feel very limited by that. For me, for instance, it's not a problem to go out as a sodomite playing piano, say, for Annie Ross, like I did in London a year or so ago. Yet some people were saying to me, 'Man, you shouldn't be doing stuff like that.' I don't see it that way."

No doubt many people also warned him that a jazzman shouldn't meddle with the classics, but his Mahler and Wagner discs argue otherwise. If his arrangements of Wagner for string quartet and piano (reviewed in *The Wire* 167) plays it relatively straight, his Mahler disc de- and reconstructs the composer for a very New York ensemble that includes We's DJ Olive,

Anto Lindsay and Dave Douglas. In Cane's revision, the Jewish component of Mahler's music comes through stronger. This has prompted some critics to read into it an attempt at a musical reversal of Mahler's conversion to Christianity. Yet despite the powerful contemporary klematic elements shot through his versions, Cane denies his project has any directly political component. "It's not that Mahler was suppressing the Jewish folklore elements in his music," he says. "They were not necessarily part of his musical or emotional thinking at the time. Though he did quote from Jewish folk music, I think he meant it ironically."

"Of course [from the perspective of the present] I was naturally conscious of the implications. But my motivations were primarily musical. For me it was a way of introducing folk elements into a style or emotional setting that was very Wagnerian and, in that sense, very static. In another piece I tried to evoke the feelings of nostalgia amid the much more apocalyptic elements."

For Cane, who grew up in Philadelphia speaking Hebrew as a child, approaching Wagner was initially much more problematic. "My feelings about Wagner were very different," he recalls. "In a way I was really prejudiced. I read a lot about him. He was a terrible guy, used everybody around him. I couldn't say I loved him the way I love Mahler. And musically, the project was something else altogether. It was simply a question of taking one kind of music and transforming it for a different setting. Wagner ended up in Venice a lot because he'd participated in the 1848 rebellions in Europe and had to leave Germany. He wrote in his diary that in the cafes around Piazza San Marco, house ensembles would play arrangements of his work in honour of him when they knew he was there. The idea came up to take one of these ensembles from the cafes and get them to play my arrangements, but that didn't work out so it ended up with us bringing over our own musicians."

"I could have done a much more radical album," he claims, "and in a way I would have liked to delve into a lot of problems with Wagner, the political problems, to make his music somehow comment on them. Just from a musical point of view I knew it would be very easy to really change the music just by rescoring it for a string quartet and piano, making of it a small chamber music, and the timpanist was there, given the complications surrounding his character, the way he treated women and the musicians around him, his anti-Semitism. But we did it pretty straight, because in the end the music is so good."

From a 20th-century perspective, Cane notes, cultural-political considerations cannot be laid aside completely. "But I am not really into the politicisation of the music, personally," he concludes. "I've talked to black musician friends about this, and they also say it can become a label, the political thing. Then no matter what you do or what your motivation, that's how it gets tagged." **BIBA KOFF** *Primal Light* and *Wagner E Venezia* are out now on *Winter & Winter* (through *Harmonia Mundi*)

label lore

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Roster includes More than 500 composers including early historic recordings of Charles Ives, John Cage, Harry Partch, Elliott Carter, and Milton Babbitt

Description CRI releases approximately 30 CDs a year, both new recordings and reissues from its historic back catalogue. All new projects are approved by an editorial committee which consists of a revolving group of composers from a diversity of backgrounds and approaches

Brief history CRI was founded in 1954 by two composers, Otto Luening and Douglas Moore, and an administrator, Oliver Daniel, formerly of CBS Radio. Luening (1900-1996) is best remembered as a pioneer of electronic music; Moore (1893-1969) is remembered for his many operas including *The Bolshoi Of Baby Doe*. Since 1977, CRI has held nonprofit status wherein its recordings are underwritten by a coalition of foundations, universities, corporations and individuals

Statement of intent CRI is dedicated to the discovery, distribution and preservation of the finest in contemporary music representing the diverse inspirations of American culture

Other activities In the 90s, as CRI increased its production, several lines or series have been established to help define aspects of the ever growing catalogue. *Emergency Music* was begun in 1992 and features "downtown" experimental and post-minimal music. *Exchange Music*: At The Crossroads features composers and performers who in their work draw on the indigenous sounds of their native cultures. *American Masters* features misty reissues from the CRI LP catalogue

Future plans *Lesion American Composers* featuring Pauline Oliveros, Arnes Lockwood, Nurt Tilkes and others. (A follow up to *Gay American Composers Vols 1 & 2*). A jazz series is planned for 1999

Choice cuts *The Harry Partch Collection Vols 1-4*, *New Music For Recorded & Electronic Media*, *Women In Electronic Music* 1978

(Info & manifesto: Joseph Ridings Dalton)



Xper.Xr.

Mad in Hong Kong

"We were all quite excited about it," he reminisces wistfully, checking the wing and rear-view mirrors. "There were a thousand people out there. I got too excited and I sawed the stage in half. Someone threw a hammer which hit a person in the audience. Luckily, it was a friend of mine. The security people went crazy. We had to escape immediately, get everything into our big truck and drive off in four or five minutes. That was a very close call. Next morning I was on the first plane to England. Later I got a letter threatening to take me to court and I was told that never again would any government-owned venue allow a festival of this kind to take place."

He chooses his words carefully. "That was a very beautiful age."

Time is a souped-up, secondhand car stuck in heavy three-lane traffic. Its driver is a tall, skinny, unassuming 27-year-old from Hong Kong with a quiet voice and a secret agent's codename: Xper.Xr. All the vehicle's interior fittings have been stripped away so that it will go that little bit faster. "There's no stereo. I'm sorry," he apologizes. "We don't need music." I assure him as we accelerate through the filth of central London, leaving the losers still fumbling at the lights.

It's pronounced "Crasper," by the way, but don't ask how or who Xper.Xr.'s work requires a degree of anonymity, even though he's not pursued by people upset about the damage caused at Hong Kong's first and only International Independent Music Festival — which he'd organised, quite reasonably, so he could take apart. Concert initiator, fanzine editor, conceptual artist, musician, Xper.Xr.'s activities grew out of teenage boredom with Hong Kong's lack of an experimental milieu. Early on he felt obliged to look against the cultural sterility of his surroundings, yet he remained fascinated by the process of recycling in which he was and remains implicated.

"When you grow up in Hong Kong, things move quite fast. Fashions come and go in no time," he explains. "But they don't produce anything — Hong Kong only deals in copies. I was thinking how pathetic and weird it was, that you couldn't do anything of your own. Subconsciously that was always on my mind — whenever something good happened, copies would follow. It's pathetic but we all do it. I wondered why?"

He admires the likes of Steve Stapleton, David Tibet, Otomo Yoshitake and Violent Jansz, but their influences are not necessarily apparent in his music. Otomo, who shared the stage Xper.Xr. cut in two, is a big fan to the extent he has sampled his work in several of Ground Zero's set pieces. But whereas Otomo tends to blur the distinction between original and copy, Xper.Xr. articulates an internal dialogue, whereby his idiosyncratic response to aural pollution is given a critical weight that short circuits attempts to pin it down. Imitation, the sincerest form of flattery, has also become, for Xper.Xr., both a carefully calculated type of insult and his method of reaching into the heart of contemporary modes of

expression. With a nod to Maurice Blanchot, he speaks of "making everything into a standard form, in a single continuum of representation", while recognising the one dimensional aspect of memory that often characterises music in the East. His own recreational creations, by contradiction, could be thought of as four dimensional objects passing through three dimensional space, titillatingly grasped as something substantial, but unstable and swiftly withdrawing into imperceptibility.

His fourth CD, *Lun Hsiao Shuai* (roughly translating as 'prick in the water'), constitutes a remarkable aesthetic balancing act. Here, location of meaning is uncertain and listening is clearly as important as playing. It's mostly recorded in real-time, with a lot of the frayed edges of the production showing, and it is packaged in old Kraftwerk artwork defaced by Tippex and peppered with the logos of major record companies. Inexplicably, they have rejected his pleas for employment. Some of Xper.Xr.'s performances consist of little more than him humming along to a distorted pop song in a land of existential karaoke. Elsewhere, a perfunctory drum machine solo receives a round of hearty applause, Prince is dismembered in a playground, and Xper.Xr.'s guitar playing expertly mimics, then drowns out, that of Carlos Santana on a version of the kitsch classic, "Europa". The coincidence of performances — the perfect pop song set against the version of it you sing to yourself in the shower — provides a portrait of redeeming clarity that never materialises. Instead, you're drawn into a realm of simulation where clichés are amplified and thrown back in the faces of inadequate pop icons.

On this new CD, Xper.Xr. thinks he is on track at last. "I had to ask myself: are you just taking the piss and being sarcastic about a particular piece of music? People laugh, but after they laugh, what happens? It's OK to be entertaining, but I concentrate now on how to represent music, how to bring my feelings out, how to connect."

The result is at once hilarious and disturbingly uncanny — a philosophical pop music with a satirical edge. His work is distinguished from John Oswald's *Plunderphonics* ("a kind of old idea already," Xper.Xr. suggests tentatively) by its lack of clinical necrosis, and from the media jam of numberless sampling malingers by the transparency of its sources. His music is neither earnest nor knowingly ironic. Rather, it marks a new way of consuming and producing popular culture. Like the unseen ship in Botany Bay, it's waiting to be recognised for what it is and named. Though he craves recognition and the trappings of fame, the idea comes first. Xper.Xr. asserts, and getting the music to approximate to that idea remains a challenge. Overcoming the resistance of his materials is complemented by questioning the expectations he has of himself. Live performance — he's done a few and each time jaws drop audibly, whether at his wild body-popping or the handjini he pulls on the audience — is a problematic prospect, one he relishes. "I always liked the idea of embarrassing yourself and seeing deep inside, asking: what are you going to do now? After body popping — ballet?" That kind of process opens up your mind, makes you carry on. **ED BAXTER** *Lun Hsiao Shuai* is available now on Vaseline (through These Records)





Schizoid

Cut-up cabaret

As by name, so by nature — the London collective Schizoid is a single entity housing a multiple personality disorder. It is, in no particular order, a dada cabaret of grotesque delights, and a more formal, not to say palatable group fronted by Japanese singer Coco and its founding pair of composer-performers, Simon Shannon and Ged Barry, who are ready to turn their seriously anti-damaged souls inside out to get a reaction, be it laughter or disgust.

The Schizoid character permeates each of its component personalities, which again fragment into a mess of conflicting and contrasting activities, among them the running of a record company, named Readymade by way of homage to Marcel Duchamp. Indeed, as the old, unPC, joke goes, these people need to be schizophrenic to cope with their workload.

In cabaret mode, Club Schizoid splits into two distinct parts. The first part is given over to The Readymades — “in-house acts of the record label”, quips Shannon — the second part to the Coco-fronted Schizoid group. There’s no let up in the interval, when the screen comes down to show animation, film and industrial stock footage, or at the evening’s close when a mixture of underground sound “and odd, quirky things” plays out the night. “We are all interested in throwing together high art and pop crassness and seeing what comes out of the head-on collision,”

asserts Shannon. “Sometimes it can be brutal, funny and ridiculous.”

The ‘Readymades’ section gives geek acts like *Ilustrous Hank*, *The Naked Cowboy* and *Fishof The Glass* the chance to parade their nuttiness between music sets that resolutely resist easy categorisation. First it is furious thrash underscored with stride piano, then it is punked up classical, and so on. The music switches tracks and montages styles as readily as a John Zorn piece, though without Zorn’s virtuosity of invention. It’s more downish Eugene Chadbourne, perhaps — and just as imitating, sometimes, in the way the music occasionally substitutes punchlines for punches. Indeed, such sharp mood swings from slapstick to high seriousness, characteristic nearly all the collective’s musical output, gang by the solo CDs Shannon and Barry have released through Readymade — respectively, *Bloody Jesus* and *Shower Wilderness*. But at its best, their work transcends the sum of its parodic parts to click into something genuinely original. For instance, Ged Barry’s “Tango With Cows” (well, it’s more elephants in labour than dancing bovines) explores the comic effect of stacking layer upon layer of trombone lines while lumberingly investigating the moody properties of low end harmonies. The broad range of moods and voices, the multilayering of found sounds, the virtuosic flourishes, make their releases a challenge to shelf fillers when it comes to placing exactly what they do.

“We started the record company as a reaction to the impossibility of a response from the conventional music industry,” says Shannon. “We saw the opportunity to bring together a collective of like-minded artists from different disciplines to explore

and work to our own agenda.”

Before Shannon and Barry went Schizoid, their various activities included doing time for contemporary dance outfits, a digital-industrial project PP, and running an instrumental five-piece Jig-Antic, whose jazz, folk, World and classical fusions landed them gigs as far apart, temperamentally speaking, as the Tenor Ciel and any number of crusty pubs round London. “I spent a lot of time playing acoustic music with lots of space,” says Shannon, when asked about the switch from Jig-Antic to Schizoid, “and eventually it was very refreshing to think of other levels to the music, dealing with people’s reactions to the components, and getting a completely different reaction from the audience. I decided to draw from a much wider palette and use sound to convey the message in the music. I want a piece of music to be a commentary about how we listen to things.”

Together and apart, Shannon and Barry’s music incorporates elements of group improvisation, cute Japanese advertising jingles, domestic noise, straight rock and so on. Once put through the Schizoid mix it isn’t so easy to isolate their sources.

“After a number of years of being a working musician,” Ged Barry explains, “I decided to immerse myself in rusty academia. This in a positive way opened out a new world of musical thought and sound, based on the ideas of composers like John Cage and Ligeti. I really liked Cage’s idea of the act of creativity being devoid of angst, his use of chance procedures and the concept of any sound becoming music through the act of listening.”

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the frith element

Whether upfront on his own projects or undercover in groups like Naked City, guitarist **Fred Frith** has sought ever more imaginative ways to keep the traffic moving between rock, jazz, improvised and utility musics. Words: Mike Barnes. Photography: Eva Verrandel





“I take exception to the word abuse,” bristles Fred Frith, responding to a remark about his guitar style. “The word’s often used because it sounds fun, but it has very little to do with what I’m actually doing. It always amuses me when people apply words like ‘torture’ and ‘abuse’ and ‘beat’ to the way I play the guitar, when actually I’m very gentle — I don’t break strings. The guitar I was playing last night was the same one I was using with Henry Cow.”

A prolific guitarist and improviser of rare invention, Fred Frith has been a vital presence in contemporary music for nigh on three decades. Whether performing solo or in any number of groups, as leader, guitar catalyst or jollying bass player, he has worked the interstices of rock, jazz, scored and free musics. Over the years he has built a formidably wide-ranging body of work, taking in the oppositional rock of Henry Cow, the experimental song stylings of The Art Bears and the occasionally explosive chamber rock of his guitar quartet. He has also composed music for dance and film and, in Sally Potter’s *The Tango Lesson*, both together. Small wonder he’s just a little testy to be remembered here in the UK as a ‘guitar abuser’, or as a founding member of Henry Cow.

When I call Frith at his home in Stuttgart to set up a meeting, he is co-operative but a touch wary about the whole process. When he was last interviewed for *The Wire* some years ago he spent most of the discussion fielding questions about Henry Cow, and he made it clear he didn’t want to replicate the experience this time. I meet him a few weeks later in the cafe at London’s ICA the day after the Timescales concert in which he performed with fellow ex-Henry Cow member Chris Cutler, AMM pianist John Tilbury, and decks/synth/sampler manipulator Frank Schulte, as part of the LMC’s *Zwischenspiel* series (see On Location, *The Wire* 167). Any residual fear that the encounter might prove tough evaporates when he turns up in good spirits, whistling “Beautiful Dreamer”, before settling down for a lengthy conversation.

In the beginning there was...

Despite Fred Frith’s reluctance to engage with his past, the subject of Henry Cow and his formative years cannot entirely be avoided. I put forward the view that the kind of things he was doing with the group back in the 70s must have made him the first guitarist to bring the techniques and approach of free improvisation to the rock milieu, if not exactly into the rock mainstream.

“This could be a difference in philosophy between us,” he counters. “I suppose I would have to consider myself a pioneer in some way or another, but it doesn’t quite fit. Coming from the rock background that I did, I feel as if the use of the rock guitar in *The Velvet Underground*, Zappa — especially in his recording of the guitar — Jeff Beck or Pete Townshend — they were all doing things that for me were new and exciting.”

Regardless of Beck and Townshend’s considerable innovations, they were still linked to a blues tradition, whereas Frith’s approach to guitar playing came from somewhere completely outside of that.

“I was a failure, then,” he jokes, “because I certainly have a blues base. I guess I was experimenting in a slightly different way. Also, it begs the question ‘What is rock music, anyway? What category are we actually in?’ In those days, improvisors didn’t want anything to do with me, I was a rock musician. And rock musicians said, ‘This isn’t really rock music, this is some sort of avant-garde shit.’ So we weren’t exactly accepted in either world.”

“I’m exaggerating the negative side for dramatic effect,” he admits. “Of course we did OK, but there was a subtext. Even Parker called me because he wanted to use my name in the application for the founding grant for the London Musicians’ Collective. It’s funny to me now that he would think I had the sort of status that would be important to put on a letterhead. He said, ‘Of course we wouldn’t want you to play anything, we’d just like to use your name,’” he recalls with a loud guffaw. “I can laugh about it now, but at the time I was a bit disconcerted. But even also put me in touch with Hans Reichel, for example, which was important for me, just as Lol Coxhill saw me play and said, ‘There’s this bloke Derek Bailey you’d probably be interested in.’ Derek was, and has always been, very supportive — a good friend since I first saw him play in 71 and I was the only member of the audience.”



An Englishman in New York

Henry Cow broke up in August 1978. The intense life Frith was living in that most cooing of group frameworks left him temporarily stranded when it split. "I felt a bit lost," he confesses. "I didn't know what I was going to do next, didn't really know who I was, to tell you the truth." The answer came unexpectedly when he got a phone call from Giorgio Gomelsky, a flamboyant music business figure whose CV included managing and producing The Yardbirds, and producing John McLaughlin's 1969 *Extrapolations* album. They had met previously in France, when Gomelsky was managing Christian Vander's *Magia*. Frith takes up the story.

"He'd moved to New York and was discovering all sorts of music. He said, 'I'll buy you a ticket — you don't have to bring a guitar, just come and see what's going on here, because I think you should check this out.' If somebody does that, you'd be pretty stupid to say no. So I went over there, walked over to his place on 22nd Street and in the basement there was a group, with Bill Laswell and Fred Maher and a couple of other people, rehearsing one of my songs." The song was "Moons Dancing" from *The Art Bears*' 1978 album *Hopes And Fears*. "I was flattered, of course," says Frith, "and I thought, 'That's already unusual enough that somebody else would want to do this stuff'."

"I got to know them a little bit, and then, at the New York Manifesto, I got to know many people who subsequently became well known, who were playing in relatively unknown formations. For instance, Glenn Branca's group *Theoretical Girls* was playing. I met The Muffins and some of The Residents. Plus there were a lot of strands of New York No Wave music."

Frith got a lot of invites from people offering him their guitars if he would play at the Manifesto.

"I hadn't prepared anything," he recalls. "I ended up playing on a few songs with Peter Dinklage that we had rehearsed earlier, but I also did a solo performance, and because I was using guitars I was unfamiliar with, I decided to adopt the approach that I'd had on *Guitar Solos* in 74, which was to lay the guitars flat and play them in that mode. That was the first time I'd done that in concert. It gave me a perspective on how I could perform differently from the way I'd been used to."

Frith ended up making his home in New York. "I can't think of any negative results of my moving to New York — it was totally the right thing to do, it absolutely changed my life," he says. In particular, an early encounter with Eugene Chadbourne proved pivotal. "I got invited to perform in a piece with John Zorn and Eugene in June of the following year [2000 *Statues*]. And in this project of Zorn and Eugene's, I think I met just about everybody that I've been working with ever since. Tom Cora was in it, Wayne Horvitz was in it, Kramer, Bob Ojerding, Leslie Dalaiba who's in my new group, *Tense Serenity*. I just thought, 'This is really exciting.'"

Frith played guitar and violin alongside Laswell and Maher on Material's 1981 album *Memory Series*. He even composed some pieces and mixed the whole of the first side. "At that time in New York there were lots of groups and everybody was in all of them," he recalls. Frith instigated his own group project, a trio called *Massacre*. The group again included Laswell and Maher, but relations between these two soured in the contest for the Material name after they had produced Herbie Hancock's 1983 million seller "Rockit." Consequently, *Massacre* split after recording just one album, 1981's *Killing Time*. I suggest that *Killing Time* might not have been unique, but it relocated the idea of the power trio into hitherto uncharted territory.

"It was unique at the time," Frith argues. "Massacre was part of a kind of reassessment. In New York at the end of the 70s, Zorn was having nothing to do with rock music, nor was Elliott Sharp. I'm not saying that Massacre was what turned them round, it's just that it was in the air and they all started looking at that. Elliott started to do similar things at the same time. Before that he was sitting in clubs and doing improvised music to a very small audience of improvised music fans."

Frith met out other versions of Massacre, but none of them really worked for him, despite line-ups that included drummers such as Anton Fier and Ronald Shannon

Jackson, and saxophonist Peter Brotzmann (of course, the latter two would go on to form *Last Exit*, with Bill Laswell, and Sonny Sharrock in the Frith role). Though shortlived, Massacre's legacy can still be heard today in such groups as the Japanese trio *Altered States*. "Massacre had a big influence," Frith agrees, "especially in Japan, where there are groups like Ruins, for example — I actually performed Massacre material with the members of Ruins."

Guitar usage or abuse?

In 1982, a few months after the release of *Killing Time*, Frith appeared at *Company Week* in London playing a home-made stringed instrument with chains. This is the kind of thing that gets him labelled a guitar abuser, but his unconventional approach and search for different sounds dates back to his teenage years as a folk guitarist, when he noticed he could generate different notes from those being amplified by using hammer-ons with the left hand.

"The first step into this realm of exploring was to dismantle a telephone, take the microphone out and attach it to the end of my guitar, the 'wrong' end, and stick it in an amp to see if I could amplify the notes that were coming out of the left side," he explains. "I actually approached this from a fairly rigorous point of view. I noticed the results. It's microtonal, a logarithmic scale going the wrong way. And so I developed a technique involving tapping, sometimes with a capo in the middle of the guitar, and playing on each side of the capo with different scales."

"Once you start thinking of the guitar like that, then other things become intriguing almost automatically," he enthuses. "I saw David Toop use an alligator clip on the strings and I thought I'd check that out, and once I started playing with clips, I started playing with just about everything I could find. There was a time when every time I did a gig I would go to the hardware store or the supermarket and come out with stuff."

During this period of experimentation,

Frith concluded that the way he was using guitar actually rendered the instrument redundant. The logical next step was to construct his own instruments.

"My idea was to do something really crude that I could abuse and develop without fear of damaging my instrument — I certainly didn't have enough money to buy another one. So I built these instruments and I started adopting the same methodology, exploring what different materials will do when amplified against strings. For four years from 1982 to 1986 I was playing guitars only in the context of written music. To improvise I only used a homemade. When I felt that I'd gone about as far as I could go in that direction and I picked up the guitar again, somehow all the things that I'd assembled from the homemade instruments found their way back into the guitar playing again."

"I don't think of myself as an experimental player at all anymore," he says reasonably. "After ten years I kind of know what I have and what I can do, and yet it still surprises me. I regard it as technique the same as I would regard any other techniques — not that I don't accept the accidents that happen."

I mention that my circle of incompetent teenage guitarists used to do things like put lumps of Blu-tack on the strings to create weird harmonics, but essentially it was just messing about.

"That's what we all do," he reassures me.

Composition or improvisation?

Frith is beginning to amass a diverse body work as a contemporary composer, including solo piano compositions, pieces for string quartet, saxophone quartet and recorder ensemble. On a larger scale, there's *Impur* — "For 100 musicians, large building and mobile audience" — that was conceived utilising all the students at L'École Nationale de Musique in Lyon, where he was composer in residence in 1996. An early love of Cornelius Cardew's *Trotsky* inspired his own graphic score series, *Stone Brick Glass Wood Wire* (1992), based on photographs taken on the road. One

of them, *Dry Stone II* was recently recorded by The London Electric Guitar Orchestra. *The Traffic Continues* (1996) features Frith as conductor spontaneously structuring the piece out of written segments, varying in length from ten seconds to five minutes, while the performance is in progress. He's presently working on it with The Ensemble Modern for a London concert penciled in for later this year.

"They're wonderful — they've been very committed to me and I appreciate it a lot," he comments. "But I have to say that even though we've worked for two years, and that means maybe three times a year — a whole day each time — the first concert felt very much like a good early rehearsal to me. It was good, but it takes time, and they've given me time, and I know that in the end I'll have something which will be fabulous."

Frith's experiences with 'classical' ensembles haven't always been so positive. He recounts the experience of working in Paris in 1990 with according to the official government description, "15 young unemployed rock musicians from the poor parts of town", in a project that became the opera *Helter Skelter*.

"We worked together every day for six months from 9am to 5pm. We were all paid to be there and in the end we had to have the music for an opera featuring three professional singers and a theatre group, who were working in parallel to us, so the work came together at the very last minute. But the sophistication of structure and dynamics that we achieved was fantastic. I never did anything better from this point of view — their responsiveness and ability to really change things very precisely in the way that rock musicians do and classical musicians don't."

The Timescales concert which brought Frith over for one of his rare London appearances, was the brainchild of Chris Cutler. The four improvisers wore earphones that communicated tempo indicators, structural cues and instructions. Such techniques are important to the musician, says Frith, but he contends that knowing how the music is arrived at is of little importance to the listener, at least not in this particular piece.

"It's our problem rather than your problem," he argues. "What's important is that you hear something arresting, which draws you in and which you get something from. We're not really improvising any more, because we're dealing with information which stops us letting go, but at the same time we all have to react to what the others are doing in the manner of an improviser."

"I had a fierce argument with David Moss years ago," he continues, "when I was very disappointed after performing in one of John Zorn's game pieces. In my punst state at the time I said, 'A good improvised music concert would make all this irrelevant.' And he said, 'Yes, but that's not what this is about. What this is about is achieving a result that couldn't be achieved in any other way. You have to accept what that something else is and learn what's good about it.' The discussion enabled me to relook at the process and get things from it."

Back to bass without passing Go

"I think the experience of working collectively in the 60s and 70s cured me of collectivism for ever," Frith laughs, referring to his time in Henry Cow. "Of course, I learned a lot from this process and there are things I still take from it which I regard as being crucial. But I think the worst aspect of Henry Cow was the way in which very striking and original ideas, which individually each of us had, tended to be watered down in the process of working on them, because politically maybe we all felt that we had to shape it."

"So now what I prefer is, if I have a project, I'm in charge of it and I will take that responsibility. I'm putting pressure on myself, but I would rather make mistakes and do something misguided but strong than spend a lot of time discussing something and end up with something which is neither one thing nor the other."

As well as leading groups like Keep The Dog and instigating solo projects, Frith has featured in numerous collaborative ventures including French, Frith, Kaiser & Thompson, and the ongoing *Death Ambient* with Kato Holski and Joe Mori (whom he cites as his favourite musician). What's his ideal role in a musical project — leader or collaborator?

"I get almost more pleasure than anything else by being a side man on someone else's project, because there's no pressure on me and none of that preparatory work," he replies, somewhat unexpectedly. "I'll put myself into it 100 per cent and I enjoy that very much." By way of example he cites the time he spent working with John Zorn's Naked City as a bass player. "It was a wonderful experience. If I'm working on someone else's project, they're the boss and I just want to make it work. I can just concentrate on doing what I do in the most apt way for the context in which I find myself and that's a discipline that I love."

Frith then makes the eyebrow-raising assertion that he almost prefers playing bass to six string guitar, "because it keeps things simpler." Furthermore, his bass guitar mentors come from the no-frills school: "those old English pop bass players" like Paul McCartney, John Entwistle and Roger Waters. "Once

you've heard 'Apples And Oranges' you don't need to hear every song he did, but it's a beautiful baseline," he says referring to the former Pink Floyd bassist. For his part, Frith's bass playing in Naked City actually earned him a higher rating than Bill Laswell in *Downbeat* magazine's bass guitarists' poll of 1991.

"I'm also Spiral Tap's favourite bass player," he boasts. He earned the accolade when someone asked the spoof group who their favourite musicians were and they named Naked City. "I thought, 'This is a compliment, I'll take it,' he laughs. "I'll take a compliment wherever I can get it."

Pre-postmodern visions of the future

The *Zwischenspiel* series also staged public talks that invited the participating musicians to ponder the question: "After the vagaries of postmodernism, where is music heading? Is there life after cut-and-paste and where do the pioneers settle?" So, Frith, what's the answer?

"I don't think I've reached postmodernism yet," he says. "I think I'm a pre-postmodernist. They're all way ahead of me! I always think it is better to have this kind of discussion without getting musicians involved. We're all much too busy doing things to have to bear the extra burden of trying to figure out what we're doing."

Asking if there is life after cut-and-paste prematurely sounds the death knell on an area of musical endeavour while the musicians are still busily involved in it. The leapfrogging of one genre over another, before the original idea is played out, is the false construct of impatient cultural commentators, rather than a firm historical conclusion.

"One of the things I liked about *Blade Runner* as a view of the future is that it shows that everything will still be there," says Frith, "everything at once. The most advanced technology and the oldest shams are all still going to be there, all together, and music is no different. There's a relentless push by industry to sell new musical technology. The same technology enters the playing arena and gets transformed by people who find uses for it that weren't exactly predicted by the engineers. In the meantime ensembles are, for example, literally playing baroque music with lovingly made replicas of original instruments, and dozens of others are inventing and building their own instruments from widely differing aesthetic perspectives. Everything that has been done is still being done and in the end what's important is that music is still being made that isn't commercial, that doesn't fit into a marketable bracket or a predictable category, and touches me deeply. And in the end what's important is that it touches people deeply, however it's done."



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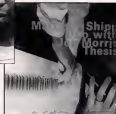
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A question of timing

Frith's first piece for a dance ensemble was *Technology Of Tears*, commissioned in 1987 by Rosalind Newman. He quickly realised that working with choreographers and dancers demanded a very particular discipline. By his own assessment, the music was too dense to work well with dance.

"A great piece of music and a lousy piece of dance music," he says. "I learned a lot from my mistakes. In the most interesting review we had of that piece, the journalist said, 'The dancers appear to be running away from something — probably the music.' That was a good criticism. Since then any dance pieces have become much more spacious — not necessarily quiet and unaggressive but a different concept of space."

Another thing that fascinated Frith was that when he dubbed a copy of the composition for Newman — who at this time was already familiar with the music — his tape recorder was playing too fast, making the copy too slow. Even though it only altered the music by a fraction of a tone, an irate Newman called to complain to Frith that they couldn't dance to it.

"When I listened to it very carefully I understood that over the course of a 40 minute composition, you're going to have cues and movements that are just not going to work anymore. The incredible sensitivity to tempo that dancers have, musicians don't have in the same way. Dancers feel time differently, they count differently. I learned that I had to adjust myself to fit into that world, somehow. I like that. It's the idea that you discipline yourself to focus on an external demand and try to fulfil that demand in the best possible way without losing your integrity."

Frith's most recent film music features in Sally Potter's *The Tonto Lesson*. He also improves accompaniments for silent films. "It's so wonderful to be able to look at a screen and play to it and try to make something which draws you into the picture," he enthuses. The erratic archiving of silent movies produces its own musical challenges, typified by the time he played to a more predetermined set of cues for Sergei Eisenstein's *The Battleship Potemkin*.

"With *Potemkin* I used a stopwatch and got a timing," he recalls. "It was a nightmare because

there are actually five different prints of this film and they are all edited differently. So they [the film archivists] sent me a cassette of one and I went to the first festival and they had a different print which was five minutes longer, so all my cues were screwed up. Now I know exactly where the right print is and I tell them, 'Get your print from this archive!'"

Problems of timekeeping can also arise when genre hopping. In the mid-70s, Frith once dipped for a sick Mike Oldfield in a performance of David Bedford's *Stars End* with The London Philharmonic Orchestra.

"I was very excited," he recalls, "but we were treated like absolute idiots, which now I've learnt is more or less par for the course. But it was an educational experience. What was interesting for me was that the conductor would give the downbeat and Chris Cutler would slap on the snare drum absolutely on the beat and everybody else would be just after it, because time is felt differently. He was always getting shit because he was too early, but from his point of view he was in time. There are three worlds: the jazz musicians who are always a little bit ahead of the beat, the rock musicians who are always slap right on the beat, and the classical musicians who are always after it. ... Put the three together and it's a nightmare."

Rock revisited

One of Frith's most interesting projects is The Fred Frith Guitar Quartet, which released its debut album *Ayaya Moses* last autumn. The group initially grew out of his

involvement with Les Quatre Guitaristes De L'Apocalypse Bar, whom he is seen conducting in the 1990 documentary *Step Across The Border*. He wanted to hear the piece "The As Usual Dance Towards The Other Night To What Is Not" again, so he assembled his own guitar quartet. It included René Lusser from Les Quatre Guitaristes Later, the arrival of Mark Stewart — who has played with Bang On A Can and Steve Reich — galvanised the once occasional group into action. "I like the idea that the guitar can be understood as something with an enormous dynamic range, an enormous timbral range and a very delicate precision as well," says Frith. "Initially, I was more interested in the delicate idea of the instrument than the visceral side. Now that we've established that as our norm we can attack lots of different types of material. It's totally exciting for me. It's certainly the highest level of musicianship that I've ever been associated with on stage. I don't think I've ever felt that I've realised an idea more completely than with this group. It's really gone much further than I imagined it could."

Though Frith admits he's no great shakes as a keyboard player, he composes notated music at a keyboard. I ask him if coming from a rock tradition informs his



compositions, or is he now trying to break away and disassociate himself from all that? "I think I've become confused," he admits. "I come from a rock tradition, but as I get more involved with contemporary music, I find myself producing things which have got nothing to do with the rock tradition and maybe are not necessarily my strengths. I think I've been too apologetic, too anxious to prove myself in the alien world. But at least I've improved a lot as a composer."

Frith says he feels the need to escape from the "contemporary music clichés" that come from his hands when playing a keyboard, and is planning to use the guitar as a compositional tool and work much more with timbre, sound and time structure rather than with conventional notation. Out of his self-confessed confusion, something is beginning to crystallise. A new album, *The Previous Evening*, consists of the music he wrote for dancer Amanda Miller and is a tribute to American composers John Cage, Morton Feldman and Earle Brown. "That's got nothing to do with rock music whatsoever," says Frith, "but I have an itch which is certainly going to push me back into the direction of rock music."

"I saw a band called Run On a couple of nights ago in Stuttgart — they're friends from New York — and I was very inspired. I thought, 'Yeah, that's right, that's what's great about rock music.' They were fantastic, and I thought I'd like to get back to that sort of energy again. So now I'm re-examining all kinds of things — and it feels good." □ *The Previous Evening* is out now on R&R (through R&R Recommended). For a full discography, tour news and more, visit Frith's website at www.fredfrith.com.

contact highs

In the cluttered front room of his house in North London, Hugh Davies opens Volume 13 of *The Library Of Knowledge*, plugs it into his hi-fi, and begins scraping away on the contact miked objects glued inside. The volume hasn't contained any pages for over 30 years, just a star map, on top of which, in 1968, Davies hardwired a handful of contact mics, insulating 'islands' of plywood and foam rubber, a furniture castor, fretsaw blades, springs, fusewire and other components. This instrument is now something of a cult object in the brief history of improvisation, live electronic music and the Netherlands inhabited by a worldwide network of instrument builders. He calls it the shozzy, because the volume covered the sector of the alphabet from SH0 to ZYG, and it was as good a name as any. "Not knowing what to call a stereophonically amplified collection of found objects mounted inside a book cover without pages, I took that to be my name," he says. "And shozzy has become the name not just for this instrument, but has expanded to become any instrument I built inside a container that would be unusual for music: an old radio, disembowelled television sets, a plastic bread bin with a sliding cover. The latest big one, the multishozzy, isn't inside a container, it's mounted on a stand that came from a kind of tailor's dummy that my mother used to have."

Potting-shed aesthetic it may be, but Davies has devoted most of his mature life to developing these instruments, playing a key role in the formative years of British and European free music, contributing to various reference books and journals on experimental music and composition, and working as an educator, composer and prolific solo performer. He's also managed to 'be there' on some truly historic aural documents: the first recordings of Stockhausen's *Microphones I & II*, made under the auspices of the composer, playing live electronics and organ alongside Evan Parker, Derek Bailey and Jamie Muir on *Music Improvisation Company 1968-71*, appearing with David Toop and Max Eastley on their 1975 *New And Rediscovered Musical Instruments*, and he even turned up as a guest musician on Talk Talk's 1988 *Spirit Of Eden* ("They looked in the Musicians' Union directory for unusual instruments, and asked 'What are shozzys?'" he explains). Plus one that tantalizingly eluded the



In the world of live electronics, **Hugh Davies** sounds from home-made musical instruments, Stockhausen and Talk Talk. Words: Rob Young.



Top: the original shozzy. Right: the springboard. Above: the multishozzy



microphone. "About 1973, Peter Brotzmann asked me as one of two guests with the Brotzmann Trio with Han Bennink and Fred Van Hove, and the other guest was Don Cherry. Unfortunately none of our concerts were recorded — they started recording everything just after that, because they certainly would have brought out an LP of that. We did a couple of concerts in the evenings, and at least one project for children — Don Cherry ran that."

The second half of 1997 saw the release of *Interplay*, Davies's first full-length CD, which *Wire* critics voted one of the three best improvisation releases of the year. The variegated sounds of his main concert instrument, the multishooy, are applied liberally all over *Interplay*, on which four trics with guitarist John Russell and percussionist Roger Turner are interleaved with duos featuring Hans-Karsten Roedel, Hilary Jeffery (trombonist and collaborator with Tim Wright's York-based Electronica groups Germ and Sand), and sound sculptor Max Eastley. Assembled during the early 90s, the multishooy is a composite of most of the elements Davies has developed over the preceding 30 years. The delicate looking layers of wood, brass clamps and circuit boards stack up into a versatile sonic workstation. Davies talks through it: "The circuit boards, like everything else, are just amplified surfaces, they're not plugged in. On the top, 'penthouse' layer are sections of an instrument based on fretsaw blades, not tuned to precise scales. There were two previous instruments which used this principle, which I call Concert Aedon Harps; you blow on the fretsaw blades. What's interesting about the blades is that you can play them in all four ways that exist for playing musical instruments: you can pluck them, or bow them, you can hit them, like percussion, and you can blow on them, like woodwind, or the traditional Aedon harp — I use tubes, sometimes two, so I can blow two notes at once." Moving down to the 'isoletop' section of the instrument, he says "I originally made it for a festival which featured a conference of pioneers of tape music and electronic instruments, so there are various references; this is a knob from a VCS3 synthesizer which makes a few scratchy noises. Here's a quadrant cut from a 45 record — you can scrape across the grooves with a fingernail. There's a length of computer

cable with rainbow strands, and the circuit board from a digital organ. So there are references to the whole history of electronic sound making, for fun. Then there are springs amplified by four magnetic pick-ups from old telephones, furniture castors again, metal rods fixed at one end and free at the other — a principle that never caught on in mainstream musical instruments."

The beauty and range of sounds Davies achieves with this delicate looking assemblage is breathtaking. When he scrubs tension-compressed guitar strings with his bouncy-ball capped sticks, he gets whistlesong. When he blows on his serbiades, it's like panpipes made of glass. Amplified springs deliver superattenuated deep drones. Goliath's timbura.

"Whatever objects you use," he says, "there is some sort of acoustic relationship to existing instruments. They may not relate to European instruments, they might relate more to an instrument that's common on Pacific islands, or Latin America, or something like that. As soon as you start using vibrating materials, you can find some sort of kinship with something that exists already."

Hugh Davies has made a study of the garnison of unconventional performance practices and non-standard instruments that have been ranged against tonic harmony during the last 100 years, and he views the present as a time when all these inventions are becoming synthesized. "In the 70s I pictured myself sitting in front of an orchestra with a sampler playing a concerto, and in the 90s I wrote a piece like that." Sampling, in effect, allows a return to musique concrete techniques, allied to the vast array of sounds which can now be captured on tape or squeezed out of synthesizers, although, as Davies comments, "I'm sure there are lots of possibilities that aren't made available, because the designers don't think it's important enough to do that. Or they don't know the potential market enough."

Despite his immersion in some of the century's most 'difficult' music and practices, the sleeve notes to *Interplay* reaffirm his belief in making the process of live electronics as open and accessible to audiences as possible. "I'm trying to make the gesture of

is a pioneering figure, forging strange, new
and working with collaborators as diverse as
Photography: Eva Vermandel





Made the shazzy

sound work properly, and not get mystified more than necessary," he says. "I used to play lecture recitals where I would play a piece, describe everything I'd done, then talk about the next instrument. Certain colleagues would never explain anything they did mystify them for no obvious reason. So, knowing the problems people have with new sounds, new instruments, there are other things that are very important, like the relationship between sound and gesture. With a lot of small computer set-ups, you just hit a button and all hell breaks loose, or you can type in a lot of things and not much changes. In my case, because I'm using smaller objects and instruments, my gestures tend to be more fingers and hands rather than arms and the whole body. Whenever possible I try to ask for a video camera and a couple of monitors at the front of the stage, so people can see me and my hands on the table of the instrument."

Elsewhere, Daves has described his own style as "recent, less energetic", mostly generated by tiny finger movements, frottage on various amplified surfaces, blowing on his Aeolian Harps or tiny nail violins, rubbing and scraping fretsaw blades and other contact surfaces with his homemade sticks, toothbrushes, superbowl beaters, strokers made of lengths of piano wire or nylon string, but electronics transmit, intensify and impart significance to these most fleeting incidents.

This century's musical inventions have always explored disproportions in scale. From the microphone's ability to turn a whisper into a scream, to the one-touch controls of the sampler and drum machine, the history of electronic music is all about increasing the gesture:noise ratio. Sound is greater (or lesser) than human-sized, instruments no longer designed for the human frame. Jean Tinguely turned a stretch of Swiss river into a sound generator; Alvin Lucier elongated his *Music For A Long Time*. Wire across spaces designed to accommodate a full-sized orchestra, David Tudor uprooted the complex 'virtual space' of interlinked electronic sound generators from their studio home and planted them in the concert hall. One of Daves's favourites is an Aeolian harp whose string-support forms part of a building.

The characteristic of modern instrument building is to involve listeners more closely in the sound making process. Thus, British sound sculptors such as Echo Coy, Peter Appleton and Jony Easterby, and Dutch composer Paul Panhuysen, have all created public works which can be interacted with by a roving audience. Although Daves's

multishazzy is a one-off, and never likely to become standardised (let alone mass-produced), he still takes care to rotate his compositions so that players other than himself will be able to follow a score. "Graphic notation suggests the type of textures to played and the precise timing, at other times there's a rhythmic pattern but no pitches, and so on."

However, he mostly lives for solo and small-group improvisations which allow the minute dynamics of the shazzy to remain fully audible. His interest in the real-time transformation of sound was sparked by early encounters with the music of Tudor, John Cage, Gordon Mumma, and hands-on work with Stockhausen in Cologne. "Microphone", with a large tam-tam five foot in diameter, is played and activated with a large variety of objects: not just percussion sticks, but electronically as well. One of the implications for me of that piece was just the idea of exploring the other sounds that were possible that weren't normally used. Some possibilities could only be got by holding a microphone close." It's a measure of how far the principle has become assimilated over the ensuing 30 years that the observation sounds obvious to the point of banality.

You find musicians such as Hugh Daves beavering away at the fringes and in odd corners — continental festivals of audio art such as the terminally obscure, and now sadly defunct, *Heimst Symposium* at Plass monastery in the Czech Republic (Daves appears on one of the festival's CD documents). The German Hans-Karsten Raedeke, inventor of the Blas-Metal-Dosen-Harle, and who appears in duo with Daves on one "Sound Picture" on *Interplay*, could be found at the end of 1996, with his cluster of fifteen wires and resonant, contact miked metal palette, in the Colourscape — an inflatable maze lying in the middle of Clapham Common in South London like a giant amoeba. Installed in locations around the UK, such initiatives provide a friendlier point of access for the public, and especially children, to experience musical practice that's normally confined to small, word-of-mouth venues. By his own admission, Hugh Daves acknowledges that musicians from the improvised and experimental music sectors have never made the best self-publicists, but he's not about to change. As he says, "If somebody really wants something unusual, they'll find me." □ *Interplay* is available on FMR (through Harmonia Mundi). Hugh Daves's composition *Strata* is released at the end of February on Paradigm Discs (through These).



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In the latest reel of his **secret history of film music**, Philip Brophy records how the European avant garde unleashed Hollywood's monsters from the deep

ACADEMY OF PERIL

The *Emancipation Of Dissonance* — there is a beautiful dream contained in the phrase that sums up Arnold Schoenberg's theory of serialism. The idealistic notion that harmony could be collapsed into a non-hierarchical plane is at once liberating and limiting. The persuasive psychoacoustic and psychoharmonic power of music to manipulate the listener through kino-dramatic commentary is central to the pleasure of listening, and a difficult one to combat. Of course Schoenberg spoke more from a composer's viewpoint than a listener's experience, and his musical texts may be best appreciated initially as discursive journeys and later as erogenous narratives.

But if the yearning for a true dissonance seems like idle academic wondering, it has been a desperate pursuit in the rigidly codified terrain of the film score. There, a reduced emotional range is guarded by harmonic sentinels — the major and minor modes — who rationise psychological nuances with all the subtlety of a cartoon shrink. Pastel smears of classical music for the correctly socialised human, dark sludges of avant garde music for the deviant being. The deeper recesses of the European psyche — while being great fodder for brooding characterisations in many

Hollywood film genres — have been caricatured often as an abrupt and irrational dissonance. No wonder Theodor Adorno was so scathing of his experiences in Hollywood. But while Adorno is still cited as a historical spearhead launched at the narrow mindedness of Hollywood's approach to movie music (which is not restricted to the American cinema alone), little thought has been given to the complex musical semantics operating in the glaring brashness of film score atonality.

Atonality in the film score signifies the Other: the monstrous, the grotesque, the aberrant. Its deviation from diatonic scripture is never slight, always excessive. Like the ultimate death that must befall the movie monster, atonality must be hysterically marked as transgressive and unforgiving. Far from being emancipated, dissonance is condemned; it is musically sacrificed at the grand altar of tonal resolve, as The End uncertainly appears on the screen like an epitaph for the avant garde. But there is no need to be moralistic about this. It's a *vis à vis* Adorno and his



proponents). The narratological impulses crazily guiding a movie may be rendered thin and shallow by classical notions of myth or the purist ideals of the avant garde, but those impulses are astounding when gauged by modern and postmodern audio-visual perception.

Jack Arnold's *The Creature From The Black Lagoon* (1954) exemplifies this: it's a definitive tale that explores the fear of the unknown — or more precisely, a self-enveloping series of unknowns: the missing link, the uncharted lagoon, the depths of dark waters, the presence you cannot see. All surfaces are rendered suspicious through their suppression of Otherness. A disquieting domesticity is generated through extraneous and protracted sequences of a barge sailing deep into Amazonian tributaries, as its manicured passengers sunbathe, chat, smoke pipes and observe leftover stock footage from nature documentaries. The accompanying music by Hans J. Salter (a key composer of this campy style of monster music) is remarkably brooding as it shifts through a kind of soft serialism that clearly connotes that all is not as it appears. As with many other 50s films that uncover monsters in oceans/jungles/caves/deserts — *Them!* (1954), *It Came From Beneath The Sea* (1955), *Attack Of The Crab Monsters*, *The White People*, *Tarantula*, *The Beast With A*



Milton Eyles (all 1956).
The Monolith Monsters
(1957) — nature is

rendered beautiful but beastly, its dissonance is not emanated, but set loose and ready to terrify. The musical leitmotif of *The Creature From The Black Lagoon* — a pseudo-prehistoric three note burst of brass and cymbal less — signifies not only the emergence of the Creature into the known, but also the cataclysmic collapse of all controlled harmonious existence up to that point. As blunt as a sledgehammer, the narrow atonality of the score (a mere, occasional flat or sharp in the wrong place) is a symptom of the compacted pressure under which Otherness lives. Typical of the 50s cycle of monster movies, the thrill of danger is sharply momentous, less a lingering suggestion of shadow and more a quick cut to glistening slime. That noisy burst of brass is accordingly a marker of sudden shock rather than a passage of psychological inquiry. The main theme by Fred Carling and Ed Lawrence to another Jack Arnold film — *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957) — similarly employs a



The Creature From The Black Lagoon

rupting brass burst to unsettle a smooth and sexy jazz waltz. The bulk of the theme has a melodious, drifting quality that, despite its calm, empty, harmonious demeanour, is somehow haunting. In all good horror films — especially those from the 50s marked by a surreal banality — the subtext is loud and clear: normality and equilibrium make for a boring existence soon to be pulled asunder. Like the rubber suit of the Creature and the optical superimposition of a man downscale against a domestic cat, the atonal slashes of merry monster film scores of the era are cheesy yet captivating. As is the nature of artifice in a medium paradoxically predicated on its photographic verisimilitude, film score atonality is less a matter of musical significance and more a matter of cultural signification, once cinematic form recodifies musical language. Reading deep in their corniness is a disturbing plea to acknowledge the monstrous, the grotesque, the aberrant.

Monster movie composers from the 50s and 60s, like

Hans J. Salter, Les Baxter, Ronald Stein, Fred Katz and Gerald Fried, could be accused of cheapening or diluting the radical force of the European avant garde academy, but it is not so easy to dismiss the filmic effects and effectiveness of their music, and the consequent role those films play in film history. Certainly, cinema history would be poorer without the gaudy iconography of horror music. For the flexible ear, one score perfectly contextualises the formal, musical and cultural intonances of atonality and its heavy-handed symbolism of Otherness: Bernard Herrmann's *Psycho* (1960, directed by Alfred Hitchcock). Herrmann accepts the brashness of his Hollywood contemporaries as a cinematic vernacular and then explores the sonic properties and psychoacoustic qualities of film music. He is thus complicit in promoting the moral association of atonality with deviance, yet more than any other composer Herrmann painted a musical portrait of the most aberrant and modern of psychoses: the serial killer.

The chance intersection of motivation and circumstance attracts the perverse and amoral plot lines that shape *Psycho*. The film's story is emptied of meaningful, coerced actions and left hollow, spacious, frightening. The main actress is

killed off midway through the film, the killer doesn't realise that his chance victim has a wad of money; the detective accidentally uncovers a separate story and is dispatched for reasons unknown to him. Such an inverted and anti-classical story structure cries out for Schoenberg's dissonance, and Herrmann provides it with a logical precision. His main tactic — especially in the first half of the film — is to suggest two things: firstly, you never know what chance events are about to befall you, and secondly, the fear of the unknown renders your existence frail and insecure. Tonality is employed specifically to enforce the futility of its scripture. Far from the maddening diana bell harmony of the Hollywood film score, Herrmann's *Psycho* not only accepts the monstrous, but also marks its presence as continual, pervasive and unending.

In contrast to the pert-killing, part-brooding music in 50s monster movies, *Psycho*'s domestic scenes employ harmony that serially modulates through a web of potential root keys. Starting with the opening shots of Phoenix and the hotel room, a recurring motif based on detached ringing intervals (like Debussy fed through a random generator), Herrmann performs a deft feat of destabilisation through numbing vectors to the controlling mechanisms of diatonic harmony. As the intervals nonchalantly float like a piece of paper caught in city wind, they're similarly uprooted and detached. The air is then thickened, as fate and chance markily combine to trap you.

This device of hyper-modulation is in effect a sermonic variation of Schoenberg's serialism. Whereas Schoenberg plays the diatonic system into a modalist palette of variable relationships which you have to

incessantly invert, Herrmann retains harmonic and intervallic meaning purely in order to subvert it. While such a dialectic strategy is hard to imagine working in music alone, its effect in a film score is one of powerful psychological resonance. From the aforementioned floating intervals to the chugging and pressing title theme, extremely simplistic shards of melody are looped and repeated like fossilized fragments from dinosaurian symphonies. Repetition aggravates; modulation induces aimlessness; density oppresses. Like the characters in Hitchcock's perverse drama, viewers aren't so much manipulated by magisterial authorial forces as they are set loose to roam a maze of indifferent possibilities — and they are at once granted the meta-perspective of their meaningless journey as the music makes them feel like mice in a maze.

Atonality is the musical key to the architecture of that maze. By subjecting people to its moulding, Herrmann grants them more than the sensation of being threatened by a monstrous Other. His score notes that in the abject void of modern psychosis, both psychological motivation and harmonic meaning must be absolutely discarded. As such, Herrmann goes against the wooden grain honed by nearly every other film composer in the history of the cinema. Next month more on *Psycho* and the continuing impact of the avant garde on horror film music.

Is this the face of New York avant jazz now? Pianist Matthew Shipp's mug can be wide open, aquistive, or guardedly blank, his expressions ranging from the distracted to the transcendent. Up close in conversation, he is by quick turns affable, quirky, candid, committed and confident. Without wanting to burden him with heavyweight labels, he is a conceptualizing musician, raging with ideas and impulses that emerge in his music as dense, crosshatched brushstrokes, clashing timbres, meandering fragments, oblique voicings, lines that thrust, rumble, cluster, knot, wrangle like centipedes' legs or fuser like tangles in the wind.

After 14 years in New York Shipp is no longer a recent arrival, but an implacable presence, an actor on a scene that is separated by both aesthetics and commerce from the high citadels of the city's jazz world (the tourist clubs and big-name halls, the major labels and conservatory-like institutions). The circle of East Village/Lower East Side players among whom Shipp has lived and worked since 1984, musicians so dedicated to flying the righteous flag of black free jazz that they find "transgressive" venues like the Knitting Factory a little pretentious, is pretty well established as the heart and soul of New York's downtown artistic nexus. And Shipp himself is restless still young in his late 30s, posed on the brink of something, curious to nail down what, then to push past it to get to somewhere else.

"I've got to get out of here," he says, referring to his neighborhood's grit and grunge. "I want to move to the other side of 14th Street, just a few blocks away

Raised in Wilmington, Delaware, Shipp recalls, "My parents had the popular jazz records of the 50s, by Ellington, Count Basie, Miles Davis and Dave Brubeck, and mother knew [trumpeter] Clifford Brown in high school. My father, back then a police captain, had a lawyer friend who represented Thelonious Monk when he got busted in Wilmington once, and also knew this vibes player, Lem Winchester, also on the police force, though he shot himself in the head playing Russian roulette. So there was some mythology about jazz around my house."

He began playing piano aged five ("I was fascinated with anthems the church organist played that were like Gregorian chants," he recalls) and became serious about it at 12. "I saw Ahmad Jamal on TV and decided I wanted to be a jazz musician. I can't say why or tell you the exact quality of what it was — I just remember he played a blues, and a ball and ran through me."

He started practicing intensely, as well as seeking out the music on record. "I learned jazz history through records. I started buying anything. The first was by Yusuf Lateef, but whatever I could find on sale, if it looked interesting, I bought it."

"There were people I knew, like Erroll Garner, through my parents' albums, but I also went to the library, checked out jazz history books and followed what they said with a completely open mind. Cecil Taylor, John Coltrane, these were names in the books, so I looked for their albums. *A Love Supreme* was one of the first I bought, and that made complete sense to me. The first Charlie Parker album I got, with Dizzy

heatseeker

Of the all free spirits making up New York's downtown artistic nexus, pianist **Matthew Shipp** has come closest to finding the superchord that will blast conventional harmonies wide open.

Words: Howard Mandel. Photography: D Tyler Huff

from the drug dealers on the corner and such situations that have nothing to do with my soundworld. There's definitely a New York school, and I'm part of it." Shipp shrivers slightly. "There are conscious parts of city life in my music. But it has nothing to do with that."

"I consider myself an impressionist, and my impressions are sidewalks and big buildings," he continues. "I mean, Walt Whitman talks about nature, but you know he walked around Manhattan, it's in his writing. In the same way, a lot of jazz has come out of Manhattan over the years. It invades your sensory world somehow."

Matthew Shipp lives modestly with his wife of eight years, the singer Delia Scafe, who has worked with guitarist Elliott Sharp ("When we met I was trying to steal her umbrella," says Shipp). He plays in mostly odd venues, and at ad hoc concerts produced from within his musical community. Already his albums would fill a bin in the Ultimate Record Store, with releases on hat ART, FMP, Henry Rollins's Infinite Zero and 2 1361 labels, as well as a host of smaller independent imprints. He finds the biggest challenge of living as a musician in New York "paying bills and trying to figure out how to get through the next couple of months." But he accepts with no more rancor than a hint of impatience that his sound is not yet hailed by the world at large.

"It's not a matter of doing this versus that, it's more like I'm in this because it's what I do. It's my personality. I've geared my life to do this, there's really no out. I have to go with it." Shipp almost stifles a laugh. "Once I got directed, I've never had any desire to do anything but my thing. I actually have a map in my head of my complete output, what it's going to be. I have a plan, and I'm going to stick to it. The plan's playing off, somehow. There have been a lot of sticky times, but I plow through them."

Gillespie's big band playing "Scramble From The Apple", I thought that was weird."

His interests advanced through chance purchases. He found Cecil Taylor's raucous 1974 solo album *Silent Tongues* in a department store's cutout bin. Via a friend he discovered Anthony Braxton and Keith Jarrett. "Back then, I'd come home, take my albums upstairs, put them on the turntable and put my headphones on. Nobody knew what I was doing. My friends were all into pop music, or soul, and I had a schizophrenic existence where I had my jazz thing, but hanging with my friends I'd talk about Steve Wonder or Jimi Hendrix. I played in rock bands, too, on a Fender Rhodes piano, which really doesn't fit into the music I do now."

"I probably thought that I was going to be a keyboard player for Grover Washington Jr.'s band, because he lived in Philadelphia, 20 minutes away, and some guys from Wilmington had gotten into his band. At another point I was going to have a trio like the Bill Evans trio, playing standards. It changed every week."

Self-styled if willing to learn from every and anyone, as wanly diffident as most Post-Sonic Youth, Shipp gradually came to abjure jazz as entertainment. His heroes and role models became what once Francis Davis dubbed the "outsiders," arch individualists on a mission, seekers who dug deep within themselves for music that's startlingly original.

"I ran into people I could talk about things with," says Shipp. "A Wilmington guy named Sunyata, spelled like 'emptiness' in Sanskrit, but he pronounced it 'Shin-yata.' He was a pianist, a mathematician, a lover of books, a philosopher, all kinds of things, and he took me under his wing, tutoring me in more than music. For about five years, I found him very influential. He worked as a janitor, and had studied with the same teacher I did for a while, Robert 'Bossy' Lauryer, Clifford Brown's teacher, who taught





theory and improvisation. I had classical piano teachers, too, and played bass clarinet in a school band, but that's all long ago."

After leaving school, Shipp reluctantly went to university but dropped out after a year: "I hated school. I hate people telling me what I had to do. I hate authority figures." For a while he studied (or "messed around," as he puts it) with Dennis Sandole, who some 30 years earlier had been John Coltrane's music teacher. For two years he attended Boston's New England Conservatory, following in the footsteps of Cecil Taylor, and then in 1984 came the inevitable move to New York.

"By then I was completely into what I'm stylistically into," he says. "I'd wanted to have a style that nobody else had, but I didn't have one for a long time. There actually was one day when it happened. I'd been asleep, having all these bad dreams and headaches and seeing these mathematical equations. The next morning I had a jam session with this sax player and it was... I don't know what. I was like, 'What did we just do?' Listening back—we'd taped it—I realised 'Wow, I have a style now!'"

"I don't know if confidence or arrogance is the word or what, but I always thought I was good enough at what I do to never consider not making it," he continues. "I've never doubted my ability to go to the ultimate in this music. I've always known I'll get my day. It's not like I have a choice, anyway, what I do is what I do. But I honestly expected to get to New York and be discovered instantly. I thought I'd walk down the street and people would know what I was doing. I learned that's not how it works. What happened was nothing."

Well, not quite. As Shipp says, he "found friends instantly." Most significant of these early meetings was with bassist William Parker, whom Shipp says he came to New

**"Once I put my hands on the keyboard
and close my eyes, it's like an orgasm, the
world's great for a second."**

York to find, and did so in his first week in the city. Parker, a veteran of the city's loft jazz scene and a member of Cecil Taylor's group throughout the 1980s, is a crucial presence, linking Shipp and many other musicians of his generation with their forebears from New York's avant jazz circles of the 60s and 70s. Shipp soon came into contact with musicians from these eras, too: drummer Dennis Charles, another Cecil Taylor sideman, but this time from the late 50s, and saxophonist Frank Lowe, an ex-member of Alice Coltrane's group, Roscoe Mitchell, Steve McCall and Leo Smith, exiles from Chicago's AACM, Butch Morris and violinist Billy Bang.

"I wasn't gigging with them immediately, though," he says. "I met a guy who ended up producing some tapes of mine, but it took years to get the wheels running and CDs out. I actually expected all that stuff to fall in place the week I got here."

Then, as now, Shipp wore muf in performance, seldom spoke to his audience, indulged in mystifying, discursive improvisations, didn't fuss with bold melodies, regular chord changes or prototypical jazz swing. His music isn't upbeat or joyful, instead it is emotionally abstracted, existential, even dark meditations leavened by passages of roccoco lyricism.

At the piano Shipp is multifarious. He's often possessed of (or inspired to) sudden juxtapositions, sustaining high energy pulsating vamps with emphatic offbeat accents, creating vast aharmonic fields of sound.

"The thing is, once I put my hands on the keyboard and close my eyes, it's like an orgasm, the world's great for a second," he says. "Well, when I take my hands off the instrument, come off the stage, here are all those problems again. I've had times of doubt. Why did I get in this? What am I doing with my life? But I've made a definite commitment to a certain language. I think I realised what I was getting into when I made it, so despite moments of weakness, I'm committed. It's that simple."

"And things have really turned around since 89," he continues, "when I started playing with David."

He is referring to saxophonist David S. Ware, whose quartet with Shipp, Parker and drummer Whit Dickey has turned out to be one of the great jazz groups of the last

decade. As heard on albums like *Flight Of the Third Ear Rotation*, *Earthquake* and *The Great Bliss*, the quartet, with Shipp's piano filling up the middle ground, emerges as a freedom-and-ballads troupe, which pins the mystical hue and cry of Albert Ayler and John Coltrane to heart-on-sleeve African-American barroom romanticism, wailing through standards such as "Tenderly" and "Autumn Leaves." These songs are ripe for deconstruction, and the pianist, fantastically busy or very spare, loud enough to hold his own, adds depth to Ware's squeals and bellows, and fluidity to the pulse/throb established by Parker and Dickey.

"I've been lucky enough to find horn players who were wrestling with certain questions," Shipp notes. "Like, where does the piano fit in this music at this time, especially after what Cecil Taylor's done? David S. Ware and Roscoe Mitchell both decided to add a pianist to their band, both definitely wanted somebody who didn't sound like Cecil, and I was the guy with the sound that they found."

Why him?

"I have a concept of what I want to do. I consider myself a painter. I paint pictures with tones. Within my own nomenclature, I'm extremely analytical. However, the process of playing, to me, is not one of thought, rather of wanting to participate in a dance of rhythm."

On his own albums (the first was 1989's *Sonic Explorations*, a collaboration with alto saxophonist Rob Brown), Shipp is masterfully responsive, whether in his unconventional piano-bass-drums trio with Parker and either Susie Ibarra or Whit Dickey (*Circular Temple*, *Phsm*), the similarly unusual "string trio" with Parker and violinist Matt Manien (*By The Law Of Music*), or in his duets with Brown, Parker (2), electric guitarist Joe Morris (*Thess*), and Roscoe Mitchell (2-2).

"I don't like to break down my style, I like the overall gestalt to make its impression, but I guess you could say I tend to think in masses of sound," says Shipp. "My basic sense of jazz piano comes out of Bud Powell. Even at my most — whatever — abstract? — I think chord-line, very much like a bebop player. I transpose that whole thought process into what, for lack of a better example, I'll say a Jackson Pollock painting. There's always a continuum of lines, an infinity of lines, being developed, very logical and melodic, but interweaving. My playing can be bare, just some logical, linear progression, or dense, millions of lines built on a bebop logic, intersecting in space. I don't form 20th-century classical music 'clusters' — I prefer the term 'superchords.' I tend to form harmonic identities not as bebop changes progress, but through the intersection of millions of lines."

If Shipp's sense of jazz piano comes out of Bud Powell, then his approach to group interaction derives from John Coltrane's quartet. "The way I accompany sax players, with harmonic clusters and an outgoing pulse is from Coltrane's sheets of sound thing. I'm thinking of the superchord — some sort of harmony that points towards infinity, where somehow all the overtones are employed or the possibility of all the overtones exists. There's a harmonic continuum, the impression of all the partials, all the overtones, but out of that density something distinctive arises. The continuum's like the subconscious, where everything's there, but something comes from it. That's how I accompany David S. Ware, and in fact, the Coltrane quartet is such a focal point for me that the challenge is more to avoid being directly influenced by McCoy Tyner than by Cecil Taylor."



As he suggested earlier, Matthew Shipp thinks deeply about the processes that flood into his music, attempting to illuminate the realm of abstracted sound.

"Subconscious processes have always been an element I'm interested in, because I'm dealing with language, essentially, in jazz, and language springs from a very deep well. Nobody knows how we attach grunts/sounds to a phenomenon, why we call this a cup, or this black, this white. The way the brain processes information is a mysterious force, just as food, through some mysterious process, gets metabolized into the body. Musicians take in food, whatever their influences are, weave beneath the surface, which then emerges in this bizarre way, which is your playing. I've always been fascinated by that."

"When I'm playing clusters beneath David S. Ware, there's a very dense pulse field going on, made up of millions of lines intersecting, before they're heard as dense harmonic clusters," he continues. "I view my music as a city, and within that city events occur. I look at each chord as a personality, a person, and another chord as another personality, and the line that bridges those chords as an event — like people interacting in a metropolis — and all of musical spacetime as some type of democratic structure in which these chords have to relate."

"Is my music modal?" He shakes his head. "Not particularly. Maybe 'pan-tonal.' I used to have notebooks in which I'd play around with chord voicings, as technical exercises. I'd play around with a couple notes from one chord-scale, a couple notes from the other, come to some voicing, call it anything. I would write out three notes of one chord, three of another, and come up with some synthetic scale. So I got to thinking pan-harmonically — again, lacking a better term."

"I conceive melody as a core line that maybe you can sing. Like Coltrane would sometimes come up with a little riff, just a little fragment, but if you can sing it, internalize it, feel it with your body and it means something to you, I call that a melody. To somebody else it may sound like a disjointed fragment, so me it's a rhythmic phrase with integrity. I feel it, with my body, I sing it, it popped into my head — it's a melody."

"I don't talk to Wynton Marsalis, or players of that type, so I don't know if they'd think my groups swing, but people get a certain type of rhythmic feeling from it. I look out and see people moving their bodies certain ways, so I think there's a

rhythmical liveness, and I personally feel the parts jibe, so I think it swings."

Against this, Shipp says, "I find myself trying to clear away obvious references in the physical world. If somebody asks me about a piece, I might tell them it has more to do with a conversation I had with an angel, than with a person or an event in the world. I deal with music for myself more in the realm of conversations with angels, having to do with that whole process of language. In fact, I'm obsessed with conversations with angels."

Who are the angels?

He pauses. "A messenger is the obvious answer. Well, we all know that we have a personality, and there are millions of other possibilities for personalities. Something surfaces — one's personality — even though it changes. Look at energy, and how it can form into a personality — to me, that's what an angel is something that's taken on a life of its own, and is a form of energy. Energy that has a life of its own, that's light. So an angel is a form of light." □ Matthew Shipp appears at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall on 30 January. Tel: 0171 960 4242 for details.

invisible jukebox

Every month we play a musician a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on — with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear. This month it's the turn of...

Julian Cope

Tested by Mike Barnes

Julian Cope's musical career began in earnest in Liverpool in 1978 with the formation of The Teardrop Explodes. From shambolic beginnings, they went on to become one of the most successful groups of the early 80s. The *Klammygro* and *Wilder* albums brought them critical acclaim and yielded a number of hit singles. The group disbanded in 1982, and Cope began what would become a progressively more idiosyncratic solo career, producing the excellent *World Shut Your Mouth* and *Fried* in 1984. *Sixthstring* (1985), a collection of off the wall "Acid-campfire songs", was refused release by Mercury, emerging five years later as a semi-official bootleg.

Cope re-emerged in 1987 when he signed to Island and released the big-selling *Saint*. Julian followed by the erratic *My Nason Underground*. After another hiatus, he reappeared with the eclectic, eco-political *Peggy Sue* in 1991. Following the release of *Jehovah!* (1992) he was dumped by Island. *Autogardion* followed on Echo in 94. In the last few years, Cope has released two song oriented albums, *20 Mozhers* and *Interpreter*, while pursuing a more experimental strain with the Electronica project *Queen Elizabeth* (a duo with producer and arranger Thighpaulsandra), and the 'urban meditation' instrumentals of *Arte*. Cope has written two books: the autobiographical *Head On*, and *Krautrock* compiles, a guide to Krautrock that began life as two articles originally published in *The Wire*. A gazetteer of ancient sites, *The Modern Antiquarian*, is due for publication in autumn 98 after seven years of research. The Jukebox took place at Cope's home near Avebury in Wiltshire.

During the drive from the train station to his house, Cope was keen to explain the archaeology of the area, making a special detour past Silbury Hill. Once home he played selections from his record collection and produced numerous artefacts including a Neolithic hand axe and a fluorescent green guitar pedal board. Once underway, he took to the test with enthusiasm



SCOTT WALKER "I Threw It All Away" from *To Have And To Hold: OST* (Mute)

[Laughs] When I first started pushing Scott Walker [in the early 80s] Cope compiled a Scott Walker tribute LP, *Five Escape In The Sky: The Godlike Genius Of Scott Walker*, there was a horrible side which I unearthed, which was the *Tex-Radio*. I DJ'd Mike Read Walker Brothers fan Mike Read would go, "You're a big fan of The Walker Brothers", and I would go, "No, I hate The Walker Brothers". He played Walker Brothers stuff thinking it was Scott. There's a side to Scott Walker which to me is terrible, like "Joanna" and "The Black Sheep Boy" and all that kind of stuff. This sounds like that, but like one step further, so it's like Viv Stanshall doing it. Is it that kind of vibe?

This is something Walker did in 1995 after *TiN*, as part of a film soundtrack. It's a cover of a Dylan song from *Newville Style*.

[Shocked] It's not Scott though, is it? It's really Scott? I hate it, it's terrible. I thought it was somebody taking the piss out of Scott. Do you know who it reminds me of — this is a bit sad as well — it reminds me of the terrible "Scottish album" [*My Nason Underground*] session that I did with Frank [Wield, getting him to yodel]. We call it the "Scottish album" because we don't mention it, we don't like it. We wanted him to be on this song, "Five O'Clock World", which is a terrible song in any case. Not only did he not know how to yodel, but my American producer insisted that Frank had trouser tracks on his white shorts. It was like a pathetic situation, and I had to go out. When we taped it back we had all these different versions of him doing the yodel and he'd be singing "Birdy Doo Aye" like that's part of yodelling, he'd forgotten it so much. That's like Scott, there he's lost it. Jung said that in the second half of a man's life his masculinity takes a sharp fall in some areas, an incline in other areas, and men

who are extremely thin in their early life may become extremely feminine. It's like Scott suddenly attained field-dom, it's like a male menopause. When you get too girly then you do become Viv Stanshall.

Did you hear *TiN*?

Yeah. That was really Scott, really far out — I found it untenable. I thought it was really true to where he was coming from. What I really liked was it had industrial music on, which to me would be where Scott would be at if he was being true. He would always have had the equivalent of the most abusive thing that he could possibly think of at the time. So it's the equivalent of atonal strings. Culturally, it brutalises my head, I can't listen to it. So it actually puts it out of my listening league, but I think it makes him a righteous artist.

I could never understand how he could be doing Scott 4 and Scott 3 and having songs from his TV series. He was clearly willing to compromise his ass on one side to an unorthodox degree, just so he could be existentialist dad in the other corner. He's obviously still the same person: he's willing to be doing *TiN*, and be a mawkish git — which is quite weird.

Barry Adamson arranges the strings here.

Really? He's good, isn't he? It's unfortunate to have Scott underachieving like a bastard on top.

THE CRAIG

"I Must Be Mad" from *The Psychedelic Snarl* (Bam-Caruso)

Classed! Is it off the original single or is it off a CD? It's from a compilation [of English 60s psychedelic pop], but it was transferred from the original master tape.

I can tell. Do you know why? When it came out on a single they speeded it up slightly on the American version, but



this is the British version, which is a much better thing. The one I've got is on [the compilation] *Chocolate Soup For Diabetics*.

You sound a bit like the singer.

I did a version of this on my first solo tour [in 1984]. Do you remember the tour, when I cut my belly open? I had a terrible drummer who was very old, John Dillon, who had been in a psychedelic group that weren't a real psychedelic group, Tomorrow's People. The drummer on this is brilliant, but John Dillon used to take all his timing off my vocal rather than the other way around. He'd be sitting there listening and I'd be trying not to freak out. It was an amazing way of drumming. "I Must Be Mad" by The Craig. I don't know what label. I don't need to know the label though, do I, to get the points?

You wrote an article on American psychedelia, "Tales From The Drug Attic", in the NME in 1983, but how do you think English psychedelia compares?

Stuff like this I find unusual because I think it's as good as the American stuff. But there's the element of "drinking tea in the afternoon" which I could never stand about a lot of it. What I loved more about America garage was that it was "Gloria" based. It was always a fuzz guitar thing and very basic themes, which meant that the vocals were going to be more crazy because of what the lyrics were about. It's a difficult one to think about. I loved early Family. The British Kaleidoscope — that's not even "drinking tea" stuff, that's just weaker psychedelia. What I find really weird — you know "In Another Land" off *Satanic Majesties*? Would that be Bill Wyman being Syd [Barrett]? Would he have just copied Syd's style? Because he does it really well. It's the best song on the album I think, except for "2000 Light Years From Home" or "Dandelion". When I wrote "Tales From The Drug Attic" I made loads of stuff up. A

lot of it was hagiography because that's all there was. But I researched it as much as I could.

I remember your parting request to the reader in that piece, which was something like "Don't turn hippy on me". Do you think that the Julian Cope of the early 80s might have classified today's version as a hippy? Luckily, the me then would have been so pissed that he would see through it. I've inevitably taken on elements which appear hippyish, but they're not. I think that's fair enough, I don't think there's anything I could do about that. I'd be the last person in the world to write *The Modern Anarquano*, wouldn't I? The more fact that I've even got it together to write a book about something to do with Stonehenge is clearly reprehensible in the eyes of the Julian Cope of 1981 — and the fact is it's a four-hundred-and-something page book. What I'm trying to do is instill trust in people by just keeping going. It's easy to be an express train if you've got a really obvious message.

What I was trying to do with *World Shut Your Mouth and Fred* was take this extremely obscure garage music which was always about "I've lost my car, I've lost my job, I've lost my girl, I hate myself", and I was trying to put an intellectual overlay, a real Head's trip into garage music — which is what I thought The Thirteenth Floor Elevators were about. The Elevators were the first group which was true wisdom with a rocky beat. They were Robert Plant's favourite group, but he did them a real disservice, because he suddenly started singing like Rory [Enckson] doing all the howling, but singing about a load of old rubbish. "I am coming Valhalla, Brunnhilde open your legs". The difference was Tommy Hall [The Elevators' co-vocalist and Electric Jug player] writing all these lyrics for Rory. He was a Gurdjieff disciple, he knew all his stuff.

What always used

to get me was these people saying The Elevators were some kind of old hippy group. I'm thinking there's a guy [ie Hall] standing there in a straw hat and a George Harrison cape, with a jug, full of grass, going, *duggo-duggo-duggo-duggo* [he mimics The Elevators' Electric Jug sound] for two hours a night when people were doing like 45 minute sets. Where would he be? The breathing, the mantra, the repeating. One of the things The Teardrops did when I used to trip was 15 minute versions of "Sleeping Gas", and I'd get them into these cosmic breathing exercises. So if [Hall] was doing that for two hours a night, he would have been truly sailing above the audience.

SPACE EXPLOSION

"Tom Hall" from *Space Explosion* (Captain Trip)
Is it itself, or some remnant of an old thing? Is it modern?
It is "itself", recorded last year.



invisible jukebox

I was going to say it sounded like someone had done to The Faust Tapes what somebody had done to Can. But then when you have that attitude to music, certain samples will end up sounding like Faust, because there's such a limited sound that things can sound like. Somebody put me down a couple of years ago. They said, "Sometimes Julian Kope's cosmic music is too obviously cosmic." If he wants to sound like space he uses an old synth. I always think very archly in any case. To me, I speed up voices sound like spacemen. I've always used a very limited palette in any case, so if you're going to choose to dilute my metaphor, you're going to not like me in any case. It's like a punk listening to Tim Buckley is going to have a problem when he calls his woman "Mamma." If he doesn't allow him that metaphor he doesn't allow him the music. I like this. What is this, *House On Mars* or one of those kind of groups?

It's Space Explosion, a kind of Krautrock supergroup with members from Faust, Area Did It, Die Krupps and Cluster.

[Cope looks at the sleeve] Wow, it's a great line-up, isn't it? It's also a great sleeve. That's why I'll always go for this obvious "cosmic" stuff myself. It's like pop art the way they carried it into the 70s.

Have you heard any of the material Faust have recorded since they reformed?

I heard the live at the Marquee tape, which I thought was great. But I haven't heard any of the new stuff. The only problem, and it's probably only me being punk, it it wasn't that line-up, I couldn't see how it was Faust. But that's only me saying it because I have such a love of them as musicians. But it's still the same people who did the Tony Conrad album [*Quixote: The Dream Syndicate*]. Jean-Henri Peron and Zapp.

And I'm the keyboard player is back, but Peron appears to have been thrown out of the group now.
He [Peron] was a real influential bass player. Donald [Ross Skinner], my old producer, had that tone on his bass it's a bell tone and I think it's from up-strokes. It's almost like you're claving. This is a real good sound. It's because they're real and their trip always was real. It's not like they're some secondary guitar player from Pink Floyd.



THE FALL
"I Am Danno Suzuki"
From *This Nation's Saving Grace* (Beggars Banquet)
It sounds like The Fall doing some Kraut.

That's exactly what it is.
[Pause] Oh, I know what it

is it "Oh Yeah" [from Can's *Togo* Mopop]

Yes, but it's reworked as "I Am Danno Suzuki".

I heard they had a song called that. So this is "Oh Yeah" with Mark Smith cooping the publishing. I'm going to do that with Fall song, call it "I Am Mark E Smith." That's quite clever. I like that. I wouldn't have done anything without punk, and Krautrock is so punky, it's got the kind of changes that only someone with a flagrant

disregard — it sounds so much like everything else and then when it changes it's ridiculous and ugly. That's the thing with The Fall, it's exactly the same as everything else, and when it changes it's ridiculous and ugly.

Did you ever do any music with Mark Smith?

No. There was an unrecorded loose jam of me, Mac [Echo And The Bunnymen's Ian McCulloch] and Mark singing songs walking home from a gig one day. In John The Postman's world that would be a legendary unrecorded album. The difference between [Mark Smith] and me is for the last seven years everything I say is exactly the same but there's lots of different ways to say it. With him, I think he's always saying a different thing but he's always saying it the same way. So really we're very, very different, but there's a similarity in the sheer Sky Saxon-ness of it.

I'm not quite sure what you mean by that.

You know [Sky Saxon And] The Seeds? The first Seeds album has 12 tracks on it, nine of them have the same riff. One of the tracks that doesn't have the same riff, when it comes to the solo, it goes to the riff that they always have for the solo, so that the keyboard player [Darryl Hooper] can then do it — because that's all he can play. Sky Saxon rang me after "Tales From The Drug Attic." The guy got on the phone from Hawaii and said, "Hi, you wrote about me, thank you so much." I was asking about the group. He said about the keyboard player, "Darryl's a piano teacher in Austin, Texas."

KEVIN AYERS

"Town Feeling" from Joy Of A Toy (Harvest)

I don't know this, but it's Kevin Ayers? I have kind of mixed feelings about Kevin Ayers, because I always thought he was so close to being good. I love "Why Are We Sleeping?" and all that [early] period Soft Machine. I love loads of individual things. This sounds really good. Are you a Kevin Ayers fan? Do you find him consistent?

I really like his music, but even his best albums are very inconsistent. But maybe whereas you don't like him so much because of that, I like him in spite of it. Island artists had this weird ability to go into cod reggae in the 70s — mildly racist, understanding the black man in the most patronizing way [Ayers was signed to Island in the early 70s].

John Cale did that as well. I'd always thought that you might have liked Ayers. There seemed possibly a shared approach, especially in your very English sound, not to mention a penchant for using oboes.

Blond haired Bass players. Plummy Oboes. Copied their heroes unsuccessfully — I can dig it [laughs]. There's a bit on that *Jane 4th* album, where they've got Nico and John Cale and Eno playing, where Ayers is singing and goes [Cope adopts a flat expressionless voice], "Oh dear, I am becoming Nico", just because she's there. He's really honest about it.

Did you ever like any of the groups from the Canterbury Scene?

I hated Caravan. Too "cup of tea" for me. I liked Robert

Wyatt a lot. I liked the idea of groups like Hatfield And The North, because there was another guy, a bass player [Richard Sinclair], trying to be Kevin Ayers. I always thought that was pretty cool. Do you remember "Johnny's Dead" by Slapp Happy, it was a single that Virgin put out? It was this death song [Cope sings] "The bullet blew him backwards, but Johnny still survived. Pam was all that Johnny felt to prove." It was like a real "Dead Man's Curve", but an existentialist "Dead Man's Curve" — just what I needed at 16 to justify buying a 7" single. It could be a Suicide track, it's perfect. Slapp Happy were terrible, but because I was a "Johnny's Dead" fan everyone assumed I was a Slapp Happy fan. One of the quotes that I put on *20 Mothers* was about that, from Sieve Wonder. "Too many people try to understand you a little too fast."



KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN
Excerpt from *Telemusik* (Deutsche Grammophon)
What's this? This could be so many things. Is this old stuff?

Yes, from 1966.

Is Silver Apples? Is it, what's his name, Morton Subotnick? Is it Beaver And Krause?

It's Stockhausen.

All right. The Source.

The cover [a surreal, pre-Krautrock, pop art sleeve] is amazing. I think you might appreciate it.

Whoa? [Referring to the music] There must be Stockhausen fans who can say this is the middle part of

He hears things completely differently, he clearly does. It's something that I've really said recently since doing Queen Elizabeth. The reason I do Queen Elizabeth is that there's no other music that does quite that for me, that stretches out so long, that time is forgotten. But it's not Ambient, it's ambient. I do it because I need that music. Loads of my fans hated that album. I was so upset, because I thought they'd really like it. Fans will come up and they think they're being really positive. I've listened to that Queen Elizabeth album ten times. I just think unless it's on all the time, just swirling around in your unconscious, then I've obviously failed, because I'm trying to make it catchy. I'm not trying to be weird. Maybe one day somebody will get it right from the sort of music I'm aiming to make, but it doesn't matter because I'm doing it more for a different reason.

Were you interested at all in the rave scene, especially the sort of Techno-punks like Spiral Tribe?

I loved the idea of the rave scene, but it was too crushing for my psyche to take, because as you'll hear from most of my albums, I bury the drums. Thighpaulandria and I will see how much Rooster [Cosby, Cope's drummer] will take. We'll say, "What do you think, Rooster, that's really quiet, isn't it?" We are willing him to tell us that it's too quiet, but he's so Kraut that he doesn't mind if it's virtually inaudible.

MR TSEREN

"Shamank Voyage" from *Mongolie: Chamanes Et Lames* (Ocora Radio France)

It's got to be German, because of the Islam

It's not, actually.

So in that case it's got to be modern

It was recorded a few years ago, but in the field.

[Surprised] Oh, right, so it's the real thing. Is it me in West Kennet Long Barrow? What's the language? Mongolian. It's a Mr Tseren, a 70 year old shaman. This is a ritual to bring good luck to a journey.

Really? The Llan Bator Storm!

Are you interested in ritual in music?

Well, Queen Elizabeth is all recorded live. We set up in the studio and mic up the whole of the studio, and it is like a pagan ritual, because it's like cooking a huge meal and everything you do is added to it. We all dress weird and stuff like that. You've got to be looking right and you've got to be in the right state. Groups like Coil, they say that they control the way they record things and they find that it's much easier to do that. I figure that I could only record it in that way because that's the only way that I could record music in any case.

If his guy lived in the West, he'd be using Kuznetsov synths to put on his vocals to be able to get an octave lower, because he's trying to effect that change in the people who are listening to him as well as himself. Shaman with octave divider is much better than shaman without. — Neolithic man would have definitely gone for that because they used vocoders in 3000 BC. The shaman would hollow out a tree, it would be a holy tree in any case, then he'd have a thing at the bottom so the voice would come out lower and it would be to convince him, as much as anybody else, that it was not him.

I had this idea for a thing called Archaeosonic. It would be a question of legging it into long barrows and going "Uuuuuuuuuuuuu" and bashing old bones. For the first six months we'd all be bored stiff making the same stupid noises. I reckon after six months, if we sustained it, all that city dweller stuff would peel off and an un-voice of truth would come through just from the sheer boredom of being in there.

SLY & THE FAMILY STONE

"Africa Talks To You 'The Asphalt Jungle'" from *There's A Riot Going On* (Edsel)

This is the best album, *There's A Riot Going On*. It's got a totally unusual groove. Have you heard "The Funk Gets Stronger" by Funkadelic? It's Funkadelic with Sly playing drums and doing a rap over it. Then [George] Clinton goes and takes all of his asses and orchestrates them with brass and strings in a Sly style. So it's really together. [Sly] plays pretty much everything on this. His bass playing is brilliant. His bass playing is white — it's got this weird, very punky tone. Because he was producing The Mojo Men and all those groups, he's a colossus on every cultural level.

This album, around Peggy Sue

we were looking really up its arse to see how it was

done, to see the relationships of the sounds. "East Easy Rider" has got an uncredited sample on it, just before you had to credit samples "Hey Pocky-A-Wey" off *The Wild Tchoupitoulas* album. Do you know The Meters? They did an album and used the *The Wild Tchoupitoulas* vocals. They're Indians and dress in these amazing fluorescent Indian outfits and they're all really old. The Meters used them as a front.

Didn't you have some material remixed by Trouble Funk? "World Shut Your Mouth" We did "Soldier Blue" [from Peggy Sue] afterwards with The Disposable Heroes Of Hiphoppy. It was really good. They are never extreme enough, because they are always trying to second guess what I want.

Trouble Funk seemed to just disappear.

Island fucked Trouble Funk up completely. They signed them as an 11 piece and sacked all of them except the main three, who had to do a drum machine album and came back looking like The Thompson Twins.

Have you heard [Walter Wegmüller's 1973] *Torot* album? That sounds like Funkadelic with a German man speaking over it. It's like they're grooving with echoed melotrons. Where you would get a pumping Hammond organ, they have pumping orchestral sound on the melotron. It sounds extraordinary.

A CERTAIN RATIO

"Less'n From To Each

(Factory)

Do you remember ESG, the 60s girl group? It's exactly like this, it just occurred to me. All Hispanic from New York. This is from *To Each*.

What used to amuse me about ACR was that the drummer was black and looked a real dude, while the rest of them were pale, wan white boys — and they used to play in shorts.

It Ain't Hot/Hot Mum! The drummer [Donald Johnson] was really heavy with them as well. Donnan [Cope's wife] was really good friends with them. A Certain Ratio supported [The Teardrop Explodes] loads of times.

How do you view the 80s as an era with hindsight?

To me the 80s was *The Tube*, because after *The Teardrops* split up we just used to sit indoors and watch *The Tube*. The 90s has been so nice. I fit in because the 90s is just screwed up, whereas the 80s was just screwed down, they battered the hatches down.

To me, *The Fabulously Wealthy Tarts*, the singers supporting Paul Young, doing a version of "Love Will Tear Us Apart" — that was the 80s. It was so hard being me. *Fred* seemed really extreme at the time, but it wasn't extreme as I wanted to do.

I can remember, after that, assuming the mantle of Saint Julian, that kind of leather-clad thing. It was always a p-u-o-n, but I knew that I had to put it on because we couldn't stand being in London, but we thought, we've got to take it on again. Donnan had to get a job because she was taking loads of speed and staying indoors and not communicating with people. We knew that we had to effect changes, they weren't natural changes. So that's why I had that weird period in the middle with *Saint Julian* and the other album which we call the Scottish album. It took ages doing *Saint Julian* — I had *Top Of The Pops*, had success, silver album, and I just thought, "Oh, right, is that it?" It was really boring. I went to do the next album and it was the first time I'd ever been dry in my life. I thought, I'm stuck in a city and I'm just some guy who's maybe a bit eccentric. I thought that's probably the worst thing I could possibly be. [] The new Queen Elizabeth 2 album, *Elizabeth Vagina*, is available from Head Heritage Records, PO Box 1140, Colne, Wiltshire SN11 8AX. Julian Cope embarks on a solo tour of the UK this month: see *Soundings* for details.



the primer

An occasional series in which we offer a beginner's guide to the must-have recordings of some of our favourite musicians (and music). This month, Richard Henderson enters the preternatural realm of **field recordings**. Illustration: Savage Pencil

"Pictures of a gone world." The expression, coined by curator Pat Conte to describe the transcriptions of ethnic music from 78rpm discs which comprise his Secret Museum Of Marked series on the Shanachie label, neatly summarises the appeal of the field recording. 'Gone', of course, a haunting reference to attrition, as indigenous cultures around the world are surrounded, absorbed and nullified by the amoeba that is 20th century mass media. But 'gone', also, to describe musicians unconstrained by notions of professionalism or competitiveness, performing as though possessed, for an audience of neighbours seeking transport to another state of consciousness. "Music, like drugs, alters the fabric of time", a credo familiar to followers of Nottingham's Time Recordings, applies equally well to the acoustic gems brought home to the armchair traveller via field recordings.

Since the dawn of phonography, the recording industry has exhibited periodic bursts of enthusiasm for exotic sounds. Such interest has usually been tied to the need for additional product as new formats appeared. At the beginning of the century, owners of gramophones could magically reproduce the sounds of farflung locales on shellac discs in their front parlours, as recordists, motivated by the profit in marketing novelty items, lugged cumbersome equipment to Kazakhstan and Matsabeland in search of sonic obscureta ('aural oddities'). Later, the advent of tape recording and microgroove vinyl discs in the 1950s, and in America, the concomitant cult of Polynesian exotica, sparked another surge of interest in music from distant lands. The development of

compact disc technology has triggered the most recent enlargement of the international bins in high-street megastores.

As often as not, the lion's share of ethnology-on-disc emanated from countries with extensive colonial holdings. French record companies have always excelled in the regard, and in the last half-century, performances snared by French recordists for labels such as Vogue, Le

Chant Du Monde, Philips, Tangent, Silex and Ocora have preserved music that might otherwise have evanesced like so much right air.

In particular, the Ocora label — the recording arm of Radio France — has produced dozens of what might be considered the Fabergé eggs of ethnographic long players, with terrific mastering, detailed liner notes and superior graphics. The sonic safari's sponsored by Ocora enabled technicians such as Charles Duvelle and Pierre Tourelle to make incredible, three-dimensional recordings, their patience, diplomacy and stamina helped them to tough out inhospitable environments, and their discerning ears located all that was astonishing and quixotic in other people's music.

David Lewiston, whose expeditions yielded many of the best performances presented by the Nonesuch label's Explorer series in the 60s and 70s, once told me





that in some regions, "Musical treasures may seem thinner on the ground. You have to spend the time and listen to everything that's around, recording everything with little expectation. Only five per cent of the music may be glorious." In the mid-60s, Lewiston was among the first musical prospectors to take stereo equipment into the field. Even with the period's technological advances, he was far from travelling light: "I remember coming out of my hotel room in Delhi in 1972 and I had 13 pieces of baggage. Now, my recording studio fits in a backpack, two DAT machines, the microphones and 60 or 80 hours of tape."

Perhaps it is not surprising that, as travel and technology have become more accommodating to those who seek to preserve what remains of music in the rough, recordings in the present day have become less selective and the performances that they retrieve

many of the most astonishing titles recorded in the 50s, 60s and 70s remain to be issued on CD. My ethnomusical primer contains selections of a personal cast, unavoidable given that the field of choice is the globe itself. I've opted to recommend music which refuses cuncta status, that asserts itself and feels fresh and modern, however impoverished the means of its production. Music that packs a phantom punch. Music from a gone world.

Bahrein Et Shardja: Pecheurs De Perles Et Musiciens Du Golf Persique

(Ocora 558583 LP)

One half of this album, among the first 100 titles issued by Ocora, has achieved something like cult status in its

own right. Pierre Tourelle recorded the 18 minute performance stretching through side one, a khrob, or song sung while rowing by the pearl divers of Bahrain. The majority of the piece is rendered as a capella, with exceedingly low drone voices stretching in a slow indistinct movement beneath a raw-throated lead singer whose exhortations are by turns poignant and blood-chilling. Occasionally, every voice in the room — the piece was recorded onshore — punctuates the end of a phrase with a single, very loud note. Eventually, brittle metallic hand percussion enters to propel the vocalists with accelerando urgency toward the coda. As Iggy said of The Stooges' *Rain Power*: "When you put it on, it will knock you down."

Music Of The Rain Forest Pygmies

(Lynchord LYRCD7157 CD)

Aka Pygmy Music

(Unesco/Africa DB054 CD)

The Lynchord recording was made by Colin Turnbull, who wrote *The Forest People*, an enduring intro-to-anthropology text. To hear the Mbuti pygmies' elephant-killing song is to believe that these small people can take down a dangerous mammal many times their size. The most rudimentary percussion — clacking sticks and handclaps — underscores monophonic vocal lines sung in a hocketing style, with each member of the group assigned a note. At one point Turnbull asked these inhabitants of the Zairean rainforest to sing an older song, something of religious import. The Mbuti conferred for a moment, then sang a song in their own tongue to the melody of "O My Darling Clementine." As surprised as Turnbull must have been by that — the piece never loses its shock value, however often it's played — he couldn't have guessed that some 20 years later Marvin Gaye would base "Got To Give It Up (Part 1)" on a pygmy stick rhythm as heard here.

The recordings of the Aka tribe were made in the Central African Republic by Simha Arom. The original album, containing adult and children's vocal selections as well as ritual songs, dances and games, has been out of print for decades. Though the CD reissue adds no new material, this collection features gorgeous examples of contrapuntal singing, and yodel-like alternations of head and chest sounds. What Steve Reich accomplished with elliptical tape loops in concurrent motion on pieces like "It's Gonna Rain", the singers of the Aka manage to do while walking to work in the morning.



A Turkano Indian, Colombia, mid-60s

Indiens d'Amazonie: Ethnologie Vivante

(Le Chant Du Monde LDK74501 LP)

Music Of The Turkano And Cuna Peoples Of Columbia

(Rogue Records FMS/NSA002 CD)

See different tribes contribute to *Le Chant Du Monde's* study of Indians living at the Colombian headwaters of the Amazon. The disc contains mostly vocal pieces, with the periodic accompaniment of an end-blown flute, the latter's timbre resembling an unnaturally melodic soda bottle. A selection from the Taitano sounds as though each member of the tribe was singing a different melody simultaneously. A flattened effect to many of the vocals suggest a trance state, possibly assisted by the use of ayahuasca, a shamanic admixture of hallucinogenic plant matter found in the region. One entire track is devoted

to jungle noises, representing in this case a poliole ambience, thick enough to cut with a machete.

The *Rogue* album, issued in conjunction with the British Library's National Sound Archive, was also recorded in Columbia, also at the beginning of the 60s, by Donald Taylor and Brian Moser. The linernotes take pains to detail the extent and nature of the encroachments upon the Indians' lifestyles by cocaine, gold and timber interests, speculating that the music found here is most probably no longer played. More's the pity, as the sound of two hundred people at an all-night ceremony, each of the participants wearing anklets rattling during the beat of wooden staves while chanting, is a sound for the ages. A limited but expressive range of instrumentation is featured: snail-shell and deer bone flutes, paripipes (weirdly organ-like) and gourd rattles. Bird calls at dawn open the album, yucca plants are washed and saved during the day, and lullabies are sung in the evening. This, combined with a complement of lustily droning bugs, imparts the feeling that an average day is passing before your ears.

The Living, The Dead And The Dying: Music Of The New Guinea Wape

(Follows FE4269 LP)

Kaluli Weeping And Song: Papua Nuigini

(Barreterre Muscaphon BM30SL2702 LP)

If the title of William E. Mitchell's recordings of the Wape people, released on Moses Asch's legendary *Follows* label, didn't invite sufficient curiosity, the notes tell us that "The Wape landscape is a hauntingly musical one," going on to cite the presence of log drums, bird calls, "a woman's warm laughter, and through it all the cicadas sing on and on." (Given your preference, the insects which often sing along on these albums are either maddeningly intrusive, or a ticket to *musique concrète* heaven.)

A limited tonal scale creates a soothingly hypnotic quality that permeates all of the Wape's music, extending even to the various demon chants sung by wildly costumed tribe members. Interspersed with the musical selections are unusual sonic artifacts: a bamboo grove burns down to explosive effect; two sisters walk through a village, wailing in response to their brother's death, and a series of lanterns is catalogued, each one of proprietary design for use by a different member of local society.

Albums from New Guinea seem charged with an emotional current that will not be denied. Steven Field, whose New Guinea field tapes have been issued by Germany's Barreterre Muscaphon and Miley Hart's 360° imprint, subtitled one of his collections *Weeping And Song*. Issued as part of the *Music Of Oceania* project, this LP is a companion volume to Field's book, *Sound And Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics And Song In Kaluli Expression*. The record's first track features a shaman, with a shamanic chant echoing around the Papuan

Highlands, an effect creepy enough to have emanated from Lee Perry's Black Ark studio, achieved here with natural acoustics. Elsewhere, slow motion choirs weep in varying configurations, soloists twang jaw harps, and drum duets thunder across the interior plateau. These albums also remind me of some that got away, namely the two volumes of New Guinea flute playing issued by David Toop's Quartz label in the early 80s.

Music From The Shrines Of Ajmer & Mundra

(Topic TSCD911 CD)

The plaintive shenis, a double-reed chanter most closely resembling the Western oboe, was brought out of Indian temples by the legendary Basmah Khan and introduced into the Hindustani classical canon. This album, recorded in North India by John Levy and initially issued by the French Targent label, affords the curious a glimpse of the instrument in its original context. Anyone who has attended a recital by Khan or Ali Akhmed Hassan knows that the shenis projects as no other woodwind can. Visiting the temples of Ajmer and Mundra one learns why it was meant to be played in the open, in galleries above gateways or in courtyards. Much of the disc, now enhanced by CD mastering, contains what polytunes might regard as free-range classical music. As a change of pace, a devotional song based on "Raga Darbari Kaniada," a late night raga, is offered with both dholaik (spike fiddle) and shenis accompaniment, a rare event in itself. The acoustic context is a fascinating sidebar to any field recording, especially so for this set, as the report of the taut-skinned tabla kettle drum slitters around the courtyard walls of the Ajmer temple.

Burundi: Musiques Traditionnelles

(Ocora HM83 CD)

Savannah Rhythms: Music Of Upper Volta

(Nonesuch M72087 LP)

Rhythms Of The Grasslands: Music Of Upper Volta Vol 2

(Nonesuch 72090 LP)

Among the first nation-in-review albums put out by Ocora, which sought to represent a whole country's musical bounty crammed onto a single disc, the Burundi recordings made by Michel Wajskel are hard to top for warmth, weirdness and high fidelity. The opening track, "Chant Avec Citarone," allows listeners to spend over five minutes with a whispy, spectral vocalist who slaps what sounds like a steel-strung wash-tub (actually, a trough either) throughout his phrase song. The CD reissue includes extra tracks by this extraordinary graveyard crooner, in addition to yielding a more profound transient response during the attack of the Royal Drummers of Burundi. The rippling polyphony exhibited during a duet between two young girls is almost sufficient to erase thoughts of femme and

warfare in the region. Vuytsteke imparts a professional sheen to the proceedings, putting one in mind of Irving Penn's photos of New Guinea mudmen, for which Penn and his crew created a complete fashion photography studio in the interior.

As for Kathleen Johnson's two sets of music from Upper Volta, both albums stand as a tribute to a resourceful people's ability to construct rich and varied music from extremely limited resources in an unforgiving landscape. Wooden gourd drums, balafones, a variant of the thumb piano, single-stringed fiddle and talking drums add up to a fantastically lively sound which goes a long way to mask the desolation of the (now) Burkina Faso environment. *Savannah Rhythms* weighs in with much tuned mallet percussion, while *Rhythms Of The Grasslands* offers vocal tracks, some with near-field intimacy and others with the wideopen aspect of a parade in progress. It also has a number of tough and energetic talking drum selections, representing a shadow of the Hausa tribe's nearby presence, immediately south of the Nigerian border.

Tibet 1

(Barrenreiter Muscaphon BM300L2009 LP)

Tibetan Buddhism: Tantras Of Gyitso

(Nonesuch 979196 CD)

Peter Crossley-Holland was perhaps the first ethnographer to document the sacred chant and instrumental music of the Buddhist liturgy. He was well aware that, despite Tibet being situated at the confluence of three civilizations (Turko-Mongolian, Chinese, Indian), its culture had developed in high isolation from the rest of the world. Into that world, Crossley-Holland brought new timbres, rapturous and disquieting: the gyalen, a reed instrument whose piping tones shivered like wind through high-tension wires, the kangling, a short horn distilled from human femur bones, pedal-tone trumpets of varying length whose blasts inspired bliss or panic by turns, and the preternatural sustain of the choir of lamas and monks, each producing a chord from his own voice with overtone control. This album, the first of three issued by Barrenreiter in its Musical Anthology of the Orient series, describes the sounds one might expect to hear issuing from the many-armed deities and fanged canine demons pictured in a Tibetan tantra painting.

David Lewiston spent his life in pursuit of extra-European music, inspired largely by Crossley-Holland's example. Lewiston also visited the Tibetan monasteries of the Himalayas, the relationships which he developed there over two decades enabled him access to rituals never before witnessed by outsiders. In the years following the monks' expulsion from their homeland by Chinese invaders, Lewiston taped their chants, the fiery clashing of rindo cymbals and the blasts from sax-foot rading trumpets during ceremonies that lasted 12+ hours and more. Vinyl mastering techniques were usually insufficient to contain the heavenly fury of these

performances, another reason to welcome the CD reissue of Lewiston's field work.

Music From The Morning Of The World: Balinese Gamelan

(Nonesuch 979196 CD)

Among the best known of the Nonesuch Explorer series, this album recorded in Bali introduced to the world at large the magnificent machine-gun ferocity of the Ramayana Monkey Chant of the Ketjak Dance, a piece which found its way into car adverts and Kenneth Anger films alike, and which may have become the Pachelbel's Canon In D of World Music. Compared with the original vinyl pressings, the CD reissues of Explorer titles allow for vastly improved tone colour and imaging (the gamelan orchestras featured here were among David Lewiston's first stereo recordings). *Music From The Morning Of The World* samples several formats and tunings of gamelan playing, Balinese gamelan, compared to its more sedate and meditative form in neighbouring Java, jumps like Duke Ellington. While on the island, Lewiston ferreted out a rarely heard Angklung (bamboo tube, as opposed to the better known metallophone) gamelan, also included here. The recordist acknowledged that this collection, the first of an Explorer set devoted to Balinese culture, has become a cult favourite over the years. "Having the recordings be as good as the music makes all the difference."



Music In The World Of Islam: The Human Voice/Flutes

(Topic TSCD901 CD)

Music In The World Of Islam: Strings, Flutes & Trumpets

(Topic TSCD902 CD)

Music In The World Of Islam: Reeds & Bagpipes/Drums & Rhythms

(Topic TSCD903 CD)

Originally released on six LPs, the fruits of Jean Jenkins's and Paul Rousing Olsen's mid-70s wanderings throughout the Islamic realm were released on Tangent in France prior to their release on

CD. Compressed into the contents of the originals were field recordings made over a huge area, "tens of thousands of miles of Africa, parts of Europe and Asia which are today, or have been in the past, Islamic". Extra texture came from the fact that the recordings were made over a 15 year period, on equipment of varying standards by this ultra-penetrative team.

When these records were first released in 1976, the Hermitage Museum in London mounted an exhibition entitled "Music And Musical Instruments In The World Of Islam". The show's catalogue was written by Jenkins and Rousing, and the bibliography alone contained some 700 references. The exhibition, and more importantly, the albums that inspired it, brought home the extent to which the rest of the world was indebted musically to the region traversed by the recording duo. Many of the instruments found in India and South East Asia, not to mention China, Korea, Japan and Vietnam, have as progenitors instruments long in use by Islamic players. The debt is larger still in the orchestral palette of Europe's classical music. Folk music drew from Islamic vocal styles. The bounty of Islam's achievement is spread evenly across the three Topic discs.

The coruscating tones of the Persian ney flute are given much disc space, as are examples of various forms of spine fiddle (rabab, rubab, rebaba, etc.). Nigerian nafir trumpets of limited range, but enormously powerful, are heard at a wedding in Marrakesh. A procession of wavy trumpets of various sizes stream through a Ugandan outdoor festival, set to a rhythm where the downbeat is in continual flux, the sound of heavenly chaos, no less.

Half of one disc is devoted to "Drums And Rhythms". The Indian tabla, the Iranian zarb (for which a player is said to require "a hand of iron"), the Moroccan bendir and the Algerian zerbahgal are showcased in settings ranging from processions of high ceremony to solo recitals.

Music In The World Of Islam, in a development that could not have been foreseen by its recordists, has since taken on a life of its own beyond the confines of academia, providing the spur to a new realm of musical endeavour. The recording of the Lebanese vocalist Dunya Yunis provided the footing for two song collages on David Byrne and Brian Eno's 1980 collaboration *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*. The original recording, keen and pure, is one of 14 examples contained in the volume devoted to the human voice.

Just as music continues to evolve in the world of Islam — the New Zealand ethnographer David Parsons's 15 disc update of music from the diaspora a due for imminent release on Celestial Harmonies — so has the final chapter yet to be written for Jenkins and Rousing's splendid anthology. The shadow cast by the collection lengthens ever toward the horizon. □ CD releases: *Ocarina, Unesco/Alexis and Le Chant Du Monde* distributed through Harmonia Mundi; *Lyndon* through Koch International; *Rogue* through Sterns; *Topic* through Topic; *Nonesuch* through WEA; *Walkways* through Koch International, or direct from Smithsonian Folkways; tel 001 800 470 5815. For deleted and secondhand CDs, try contacting Ray's Jazz Shop, 180 Shaftesbury Ave, London WC2H 8LS, tel 0171 240 3969.



Composer **Lalo Schifano** tells Daniel Pemberton how he scored *Mission: Impossible*, *Enter The Dragon* and

ACTION MAN

other Hollywood blockbusters of the 60s and 70s.
Photography: Dean Belcher

A match is lit, a fuse burns. Accompanying this image of impending destruction is one of the most famous signature tunes in the world, a high-paced mix of menacing piano, screaming horns and racing percussion. Like many of the pieces written by composer Lalo Schifrin, the *S4* title theme to *Mission Impossible* has entered the general lexicon of the 20th century, its themes and motifs proving more memorable than the show they were originally composed for. In a career that stretches back to the early 1950s, Schifrin has dabbled in jazz, disco, rock, opera, conducted symphonic works, written *Third Stream* compositions for Cannonball Adderley and Paul Horn (both in 1969), and recorded his own albums of jazz-meets-classical meditations, the wittily titled 1966 Verve release *The Dissection And Reconstruction Of Music From The Past As Performed By The Innates Of Lalo Schifrin's Demented Ensemble As A Tribute To The Memory Of The Marquis De Sade* (no, it's not as good as it sounds). But in spite of all this intense activity, he is still best known for the many innovative scores and soundtracks which he has written for film and TV over the last 30 years.

Born in Buenos Aires in 1932, Schifrin was raised in a musical environment: his father, Luis, was concert master for The Buenos Aires Philharmonic. By the time he was 19 he had become an accomplished pianist, and received a scholarship to study composition at the Paris Conservatoire. One of his lecturers was the composer Olivier Messiaen.

"He opened my ears, my perception, to many things I didn't know before," Schifrin tells me. "The duration of time, what we call rhythm, he extended the idea. The augmentation and diminution of values in mathematics are called rational numbers 1, 2, 4, 8, 16. He instead used irrational numbers. What happens if you add a fifth of a value to each one of the notes of a figure? What happens if you add a dot to each note? It becomes extremely complex and complicated so you have to hear and perceive those rhythms. He created scales of dynamics, scales of attacks: marcato, staccato, legato, non-legato, and composed with these kind of scales besides the scales of pitch. He taught me about modes of limited transposition. They were very useful to me in the music for films because there is a twilight zone between tonal music and atonal music. You create a gray zone in which it is not totally atonal but it is not totally tonal either to help create tension. I'll give you an example: One of the scales of limited transposition was the basis of the main theme for *Mission Impossible*. Not the main title theme that became popular but the suspense theme, the one that sounds like a paramilitary operation [credited as "The Plot" on soundtrack recordings]. This piece was totally based on one of the scales of Messiaen."

In Paris Schifrin lived a double existence, studying classical music by day and earning a living at night playing in the city's jazz clubs. However, because of the animosity that existed between the worlds of improvised and composed musics, he kept his two lives separate.



"When I became a teenager I discovered modern American jazz. However, I also discovered that the jazz and classical people didn't like one another. They didn't understand each other. The best thing for me to do was to keep quiet. The jazz musicians would say that classical was long-haired music, while the classical musicians would say, 'I'm not interested in jazz, that's not music.' This, though, helped me to develop my own voice, to put the two things together. I didn't think that there were any walls. It's like two streams being separated by a dam. If there is no dam then all of a sudden the water is one water. The music is one music."

In the mid-1950s Schifrin returned to Buenos Aires and formed one of the country's first jazz orchestras, a 16-piece big band. As well as regular appearances on TV for the orchestra, the composer started to take on numerous other film, TV and radio projects. Having already written an extended work for Dizzy Gillespie, Gilsoniano, while still in Argentina, he was offered the post of pianist in the trumpeter's own big band after he had relocated to New York in 1958. Over the next five years Schifrin

immersed himself in the jazz life, working with Roland Kirk, Quincy Jones, Jimmy Smith, Third Stream guru Gunther Schuller (Schiffin played piano on Schuller's 1963 compositions for Eric Dolphy), Stan Getz and Count Basie, among others, his contributions ranging from arranging to writing to performing.

"For Count Basie I arranged. Count Basie had a personality that was his personality and you had to adjust yourself to that. I happened to like what he did — I couldn't change him to my style. But people like Stan Getz came to me to make an album [1964's *Reflections*] in which I would do things to take him somewhere else. All these artists are different. The main point of working collaboratively was to inspire them as writers. They're good already, they don't need me, they don't need anybody. It's to create an atmosphere that will bring the best out of them."

With a steadily increasing number of TV and movie commissions, Schiffin made the inevitable move to Hollywood, where his jazz-influenced scores for TV shows such as *Hisson Impossible* and *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* or films like *Jayhawk* (1964) and *The Grinnon Kid* (1965) quickly gained widespread attention. Often encapsulating simple, memorable melodies with strong, complex rhythms, Schiffin's music, much like that of his contemporaries Henry Mancini and John Barry, would heavily enhance and influence the character of the films themselves. Schiffin claims that his freedom to move away from the standard orchestrated score was helped immeasurably by the climate of film making of the time.

"The studios liked my music, but at the time the United States public was going through a very traumatic moment in their history, which was the war in Vietnam. There was a lot of protest among the students, and as they were the principal movers many films were made for them. Things I worked on like *Cool Hand Luke* [1968] were really films of protest, and that's why my music fitted. Even *Bullitt* [1968], he's a detective but a different kind of detective. *Dirty Harry* [1971], he plays by his own rules. It was a different kind of attitude in general. It's mass psychology that helped me be with a new system of film making."

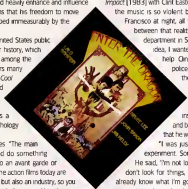
"Hollywood was always conservative," he continues. "The main thing was to break that conservatism and try and do something different. But if the film is conservative you can't do an avant garde or jazzy score, you have to be with the movie. Many of the action films today are so expensive, and film making is not only an art form but also an industry, so you have to sometimes write the sort of music that goes with the scene. Now the movies have gone back to being simply sheer entertainment. I've done many of those too — you don't have to think too much. But I prefer doing the ones where I have to think because the contribution makes more sense."

Part of the cult status of Schiffin's work was undoubtedly a consequence of the films and actors his music was associated with: Clint Eastwood, Steve McQueen in *Bullitt*, Bruce Lee in *Enter The Dragon* (1973). However, the public fascination with these actors is no doubt partly due to the laid-back cool of the themes and scores that accompanied their celluloid appearances.

"Those kinds of films helped me and I helped those films," says Schiffin. "I had to think a lot before I wrote one note because I was not just writing music for the background, I was making a contribution to the whole film. In the case of *Cool Hand Luke* I started with just one guitar solo. These things were not done in Hollywood before and they loved it because it was fresh, it was something new."

Considering the status of Schiffin's work it's surprising how much of it is still relatively hard to get hold of, despite recording numerous projects for labels such

Top to bottom: Sleeves of the soundtrack albums for *Bullitt* and *Enter The Dragon*; Laif Schiffin in the studio, mid-60s



as Verve, Colpix and MGM, most have yet to be reassured on CD. Even the soundtracks to high profile films such as *Dirty Harry* are only really available through rigorous searching of specialist second-hand shops. But that doesn't seem to have affected a current fashionability for his music, sparked off by HipHop producers sampling breaks from the *Enter The Dragon* soundtrack, and advertising executives using the souped-up theme from *Bullitt* to sell cars. And then there is Portsmouth, who sampled a huge chunk from his beautifully mysterious piece "The Danube Incident" to form the basis of their "Sour Times" track. Impressed by the results (no doubt aided by a generous royalty agreement), Schiffin has an open-minded view of this kind of reappraisal.

"I actually started sampling. I was a precursor to all this," he says. "I say this without bragging, it was true. When I did *Enter The Dragon* I used the voice of Bruce Lee from the movie in the actual soundtrack. I recorded the music and then mixed on the voice of Bruce from the film together. In *Sudden Impact* [1983] with Clint Eastwood I did the same thing. The beginning is so surreal, the music is so violent but what you see is a very peaceful scene of San Francisco at night, all tall buildings and lights. I needed to create a bridge between that reality to the reality of a detective working for the police department in San Francisco. After the picture was shot I had a good idea, I wanted to use Clint's voice through a car radio asking for help. Clint called a friend of his who worked in the Hollywood police department and he wrote us a small script using all the correct terminology and I directed Clint reading this in the recording studio. I integrated his voice with the ending of the main title music."

Schiffin's scores also made use of unorthodox instrumentation, incorporating cymbalums, snars, colloges and banjos alongside unusual big band set-ups. But he denies that he was trying to be experimental simply for the sake of it.

"It was just trying to create the sound in my head. I don't experiment. Someone once asked Picasso what he was looking for. He said, 'I'm not looking for anything, I've found it'. I'm the same way. I don't look for things, I don't experiment. When I go to the score paper I already know what I'm going to do. The work of art is in the details. I do my experimentation in my head. I think a lot before I write things down. I go for walks and I hear things and put them together in my mind. I don't want you to think that I know everything, I always have something to learn, but I am usually well prepared. For instance, with *Enter The Dragon* I felt equipped to recreate the music of the Orient. And if I couldn't find an instrument in Hollywood — there were some koto players who could read the music but weren't good enough — I would get the koto sound by using either a different instrument or a combination of instruments that could be played well enough to get the same sound."

Today, Schiffin works mostly in classical music, alongside writing and conducting numerous symphonic works he is the arranger for The Three Tenors. However, it is for his film music written between the early 60s and mid-70s that the composer remains most influential. Having had such an involved career, I wondered whether there was anything he still wanted to do.

"My wife always told me to be careful what I wish for," he jokes, "because it usually ends up happening. I remember when I was very young, before I went to Paris, when I went out I said to my mother, as a joke, 'If Dizzy Gillespie calls tell him I'm not here'. Ten years later I ended up working with him. So who knows what the future holds?" □



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George Russell is a related musical theme whose career stretches back to the formative years of bebop, a profound influence on the revolutionary music of Miles Davis and John Coltrane, he inspired a generation of Scandinavian musicians. An American and long Russell emerged from the calendar his 75th year in a special project which unites his own living group with strings, voices and additional brass drawn from students from the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, and Peter Gussakovskiy - some eighty musicians in total. The concert will pull together to present, rarely performed pieces from the Russell repertoire classical the Shostakovich and Ligeti to the Schoenberg elegiac the orchestral sweep of a "K. premiere to Delius and Stravinsky

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charts

Playlists from the outer limits of planet sound

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Marilyn Crispell & Eddie Prevost Band On The Wall (Matchless)
Terry Riley Poppy Nopod And The Phantom Band (Organ Of Corti)
Hats Gustafsson Parrot Fish Eye (Okkadisk)
Virgil Moorefield The Temperature In Hell Is Over 3000 Degrees (Izadik)
Kevin Drumm Kevin Drumm (Perdition Plastics)
Stefan Jaworzyński/Alan Wilkinson In A Serenamental Mood (Inous)
Mika Vaino Onko (Touch)
Francis Dhomont Frankenstein Symphony (Asphodel)
Various CIMProum Vol. 1 (CIMP)
Folke Rabe What?? (Dexter's Cigar/Dray City)
Tim Berne's Bloodcount Unwound (Screwgun)
Aube/Katsumi/Kosakal Monde Bruts (Japan Overseas)
David Fahlner Voice Of The Poet (Artfact)
Anthony Braxton/George Graewe Duo (Amsterdam) (Okkadisk)
Compiled by: Hamlyn, Lewandowski & Frederic, WREK Radio, Atlanta, USA

Spinadisc 10

David Holmes Don't Die Just Yet (Mogwai Remix) (Go! Beat)
Terre Thaemlitz Means From An End (Mille Plateaux)
Phone Press A Key 7" (Wurlitzer Jukebox)
Doppiereffekt Sterilization Mix 1+2 12" (Databyphysics)
Various From Beyond Vol. 1 (Interdimensional Transmissions)
Honolake Hongkong (Chain Reaction)
Raheem Quadriples X Early Morning/Raheem (Ideal)
Christian Vogel 2 Fat Downloads EP (Pnmw)
Various Masters Of Misery Black Sabbath (Earache)
Beautyn no02 (Indist Discs)
Compiled by: A/B Dub, Spinadisc Records, 83/87 Lower Precinct, Coventry, 01203 632004

Circus Maximus 15

Fennest Hotel Paraiso (Mego)
People Like Us & Sniper Play The Three DJs Of The Apocalypse (Keatonex)
Rehberg & Bauer Untitled (Karg Plastics)
Tarwater Rabbit Moon Remixed (Krazy-Yoi)
Majick & Lemon SAAB 96 And A Book (April)

Spring Heel Jack Busy, Cynous, Thirsty (Trade 2)
Fauna Flash Aquarius (Compost)
Partunes Music In Search Of The Surface Noise (Sprawl Imprint)
Subtle Tease The Gongs Of An Offer (Ladomat 2000)
Various Decay (Ash International)
Various Masterclass (Stadtplast/Korzo)
Brume Drafts Of Collisions (Crowd Control Activites)
Kristoff K Roll Des Travaillieurs De La Nuit, A L'Amie Des Objets (Metamkine)
Transient v Resident Electrical Shroud (Discus)
Orchestra 33 1/3 Orchestre 33 1/3 (Rheo/Plug Dich Nacht)
Compiled by: Christoph Toupin, Circus Maximus, Radio Arc-en-Ciel, Orleans, France

Alien8 15

B/Moto Mikko Makro (Rastemusic)
Rehberg & Bauer Foß (Touch)
Pierzbom/Haters Tribute To MB (Old Europa Cafe)
Will Oldham Joya (Dray City)
Masaki Batoch Collected Works 1995-96 (The Now Sound)
Goem Stud Strim (Rastemusic)
Various Five (Sabotage)
Aube Stared Gloom (Ins Light)
Final The First Milloth Of A Second (Mainfold)

MSBR Ultimate Ambience (MSBR Records)
Keiji Haino/Loren Mazzacane Connors Vol. 2 (Menelo Park)
Crawl Unit The Future In Reverse (Proventech)
MJ Harris/Marty Bates Murder Ballads (Passages) (Musica Maxima Magnetica)
Social Interiors Tracks Of Mercury (Extreme)
David Kristian/Lowfish Split 12" (Suction)
Compiled by: Gary Workley, Alien8 Records, Quebec, Canada

The Office Ambience

Charles Mingus Passions Of A Man: The Complete Atlantic Recordings 1956-61 (Rhino)
Sonic Youth Slugs/Kamers Met Slagroom (SYR)
Ernst Reijseger Colla Parte (Winnix & Winer)
Various Vetrain: Music Of The Monsagnards (CDM)
Tortoise TNT (City Slang)
The Dead C Tusk (Corpus Hermeticum)
Gas Zaubenberg (Mille Plateaux)
Suicide Live At CBGB's 1977 (Blast First/Red Star)
Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan En Concert A Paris (Ocora)
Various Legendary Deep Funk Vol. 2 (Bar Rumba)
Kevin Ayers Whiteveshobingwiesing (BGO)
Lalo Schiffrin Enter The Dragon OST (Warner Bros)
DJ Shadow Camel Bobsled Race (Q-Bert Megamix) (Mo' Wax)
Terry Callier Timespace (Talkin' Loud)
Tower Of Winds Architectura Vol. 1 (Caprimia)
Compiled by: The Wire Sound System



sound check

February's selected albums and 12" s



Pinque player: Charles Pinque,
reviewed page 53

Rabih Abou-Khalil

Odd Times
INLA 069330 CD

In his notes to *Odd Times*, by Lebanese oud virtuoso Rabih Abou-Khalil, Andrew Jones writes, "It is a rare tonic to hear a traditional, non-Western music played straight without the veneer of a Bill Laswell 'Jungle treatment.'" Straight, huh? That Sonny Boy Williamson harmonica and those fascinated time signatures are straight from the songbooks by the banks of the River Jordan are they?

Granted, with the likes of Faruz and the Rafikis absorbing flamenco and free jazz influences, Lebanon has always been the most Western-looking of Arabic musical cultures, and the idea here is to weed the dialect with the clean. — Now Orleans' front-line meets the barbed wire of time of Israeli improvisation. A fine idea, but the Western influence is pure mass slash and burn (Abou-Khalil advertises his strong endorsement on the sleeve). The playing is "hot" in a Larry Coryell kind of way, squeezing the remnants of Lebanon's traditional dabka rhythm into an easily understood Ozarkian box.

The titles don't help either: "The Sphinx And I," "Son Of Ben Hur," "The Happy Snake" Well,

at least there's none of the quasi-spiritual, crystal smoking bullshit that usually accompanies such things.

PETER SHAPIRO

Acid Mothers Temple & The Melting Paraiso UFO

PSF 95943 CD

The same sun that rose over Stonehenge in the 70s has yet to set on Tokyo's Acid Mothers Temple, the vertigo-inducing ensemble led by Muska Terasaka's high priest of gular dementia, Masao Kawabata. That's him pictured on the maddo sleeve, arms outstretched summoning a UFO, during his playmate to Brian's ancient stones in 1996.

From this evidence the UFO he was attempting to bring down was the flying trapezoid, manned by Gong in the early 70s. Both the dizzying whorl of typography and track titles like "Top Head Pieces" pay tribute to David Allen's cosmic mythos, but the music itself starts some way beyond pastiche.

Using a mixture of antique electronics (analogic synths, ring modulators), Eastern

wind instruments, percussion and Kawabata's patented motorpsycho guitar, the Temple crew manage the impossible of not only getting the Gong woot reborn again, but also getting it up to the speed necessary to bring the music crashing into the present. At some point in transit through the time-warp, they've collided it with Hawkwind's silver machine, merging them in one messy mothership of blisful noise. The group takes on board the redeemable elements in both Gong and Hawkwind's music — and there were some, really, beyond the goofier period trappings — but moves them so fast, to pack them out would necessitate a drastic readjustment of perception. On to the cone slug of sound they inscribe ecstatic moans, which sound like they've seeped in from a 60s so-far movie being shot in a parallel galaxy, exhilarating space synth improvisations and Kawabata's heavily fuzzed and distorted guitar. At some point, too, it seems the entire monk population of Utsa at prayer was sucked through the Mother Temple's turbogates, so deep is the Om drone rising above the noise.

The Acid Mother Temple's underground freak out leaves you grinning at the slot glue of it all and gasping at its sheer audacity.

DAVE KIPP

Reviewed this month:

Rabih Abou-Khalil **Acid Mothers Temple & The Melting Paraiso**
UFO **Altered States Of America**
Harrison Birtwistle **Ran Blake & Anthony Braxton Terry**
Callier Tony Conrad **The Dead C** Elery Eskelin/Andrea
Parkins/Jim Black **Fushitsusha**
Gao **Philip Glass** Mark Hollis
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Harrison Birtwistle

The Mask Of Orpheus
NMC 0050 3CD

Response to Harrison Birtwistle's music, some of the most uncompromising of contemporary composition, varies according to context. His operas are sell-outs — on the few days, in total, that they've been performed in this country or elsewhere. His instrumental music provokes the reaction that met Partch, briefly performed by John Harle and Paul Clarke at a recent Last Night of the Proms.

Birtwistle is certainly a tough listen, but his hostility to the Western tradition, and apparent rejection of all influences from it, escapes. Stravinsky, hasn't led him to dismiss opera. He has, though, recast as form completely into something mythic and ritualized. The Mask Of Orpheus is probably the limiting case of that approach, in the more recent Gower. Birtwistle did return to something like a storyline.

He's been criticised for making opera as all since he seems so uninterested in the human voice's natural characteristics. Certainly the vocal lines are often overwhelmed by the musical environment. But opera has always been a central part of his output. Birtwistle

Tony Conrad
Early Minimalism Volume 1
TRAIL OF THE ELEMENTS ASSOCIATES

Early Minimalism is Tony Conrad's attempt to rewrite history, an all-out assault on a most peculiar myth: a chance to demonstrate that history is like music — completely in the present.

In some histories of Minimalist composition, Conrad appears only as a footnote. These histories record that along with John Cale, Angus MacLise and Marian Zazezela, Conrad was a member of La Monte Young's early 60s performance ensemble, The Theater Of Eternal Music (sometimes called The Dream Syndicate). Wim Mertens, in his book *American Minimal Music*, states that the ensemble was "devoted solely to the performance of [Young's] own music." K. Robert Schwarz notes in *Minimalists* that the group's "sole purpose was to prolong static, endless harmonies while [Young] played". Even Edward Strickland's otherwise impressive *Minimalism*. Origins cites Young as the first of the four "great" Minimalists, the inspiration for Terry Riley, Steve Reich and Philip Glass.

Tony Conrad would have history say otherwise. This mythologizing of Young's role as a pioneer and visionary owes something to people's memories of the time, but it also owes much to Young's systematic suppression of the evidence. And evidence there is hundreds of hours of tapes documenting The Dream Syndicate's development of the extended-duration microtonal drone. All of them held in storage by Young, and never released, despite repeated requests from his former collaborators Cale and Conrad (MacLise is now dead, and Zazezela is Young's wife). Conrad suggests the tapes show Young's own contribution, first on saxophone and then via vocals, to be less interesting or impressive than the historians might imagine. More pointedly, Conrad argues that the music was never Young's sole composition, but a semi-improvised, collaborative work.

Conrad suggests that this music was radical, even for the time, in three ways. First, it took serious music outside the arena of high culture: it was music not for interpretation in a concert hall, but to participate in and perform, anywhere. Secondly, it stepped beyond modernism, rejecting rationalism and intellectual structure in favour of a direct experience based on careful listening. And finally, and perhaps at the root of Young's obstinacy, it adopted the mantle of jazz and so rejected the authority of the composer.

To Conrad, *Early Minimalism* takes up where The Dream Syndicate left off. It attempts to recreate a music that is otherwise unavailable, but also develops the amplified microtonal discoveries being made by Conrad on violin and Cale on viola in re-appropriating his own hidden musical history. Conrad is quite deliberately asking: what if the Dream Music had never stopped? How can we imagine a music of the past and



Controversial: Tony Conrad, mid-60s

then bring it into being in the present? Conrad notes the paradox that Young's suppression of the recordings actually allows *Minimalism* to open up to other possibilities, allows us to reinvent the past in whatever shape we wish. More, this belief that history can be rewritten is matched by a desire to make music out of history, to allow the historical context to take centre stage as much as the sound itself.

The first of this four disc set, *Four Voicings*, was recorded in December of 1964. Conrad stepped aside from The Dream Syndicate to create an overdubbed solo recording, which remained unreleased for 30 years. It swiftly makes clear why this music remains highly relevant. Imagine The Velvet Underground's "Horse" treated as an overdub, or 100 car horns piled up and strung out. This is an antiseptic, iridescent drone, the thrill of shill, penetrating, complex sound, demanding any other music to move to one side. There's a huge feeling of connection inherent in the sound, the knowledge that the modernist quest for sonic novelty had been fulfilled from an unexpected direction.

The other three discs are reconstructions, written in 1994 and adding other string quartet instruments to Conrad's usual violin. Their titles (*April 1965*, *May 1965*, *June 1965*) suggest a direct development from *Four Voicings* — the intervening months will appear on the forthcoming *Early Minimalism Volume 2* box set. On first hearing, all share a common bond: a dense, harmonically complex drone that is also found in the dissonant approach of later Minimalists such as Phil Niblock.

The few available recordings of Young's drone-based works exhibit an exceptional politeness, and a dispassionate idealism in the careful choice of pitch relationships. For all the common heritage, *Early*

Minimalism is very different. Conrad's tuning system often has a harsher sound, and attention to texture produces a throbbing visceral energy that's constantly on the move. Unlike the rationalist conceptualism of Young, Conrad's music is utterly engrossed in the moment, submitting to the imperatives of the complex sound field rather than a conceptual framework.

What with its sombre, elegiac tone, *April 1965* has the least confrontational sound. Yet it never quite lapses into serenity, and its nervous tension can make for exhausting listening. When sudden harmonic changes take place, they have the same upkicking, astonishing power as similar events in the early works of Philip Glass. The other two discs come closer to the demonic buzzsaw sounds of *Four Voicings*, although *May 1965* develops a vibrant warmth, a bright colour that oddly reminded me of vast American natural landscapes. All three discs have an exceptional feeling of confidence, perhaps the knowledge that *Early Minimalism* is an inexhaustible document. The complexity of the sound is matched by its complex relationship to Conrad's own biography, and to the wider history of Minimalism.

In an accompanying 96 page booklet, Conrad's writing explores much of the history and issues raised at much greater length, including an acknowledgement of the difficulties in using new compositions to take on music that was inherently opposed to composition itself. The *Four Voicings* disc is also an enhanced CD (for Macs or PCs with QuickTime), adding video footage of interviews and concerts, the latter exhibiting a flair for stage lighting which does enhance the experience. As a whole, it's a monument to a distinctive, articulate vision, an all too rare combination of dispassionate, demanding musical sound with a suitably provocative analytical context.

BRIAN DUGUID

begin working on *Ophelus* in 1973, and it had its premiere in 1986 at the London Coliseum. Like *Gossamer* in the 90s, this was heralded as the musical and theatrical event of the decade. Since then, predictably, there have been no further complete stagings. This remarkable live recording was made from a concert performance at the Festival Hall in 1996, by the BBC Symphony Orchestra and BBC Singers conducted by Andrew Davis. Cuts were made in the recording, but only minimal from the interludes repeated elsewhere.

It's a major drawback that Ophreus is so hard to follow. It's the most extreme example of Berlioz's "multi-perspective" approach. By viewing the same events or material from different perspectives, he believes a more complete picture can be built up. That's the idea anyway, I gave up in the Third Act. Maybe we don't need to be reminded of the myth of Ophreus and the Underworld. But in the *Motets* by Peter Zinoviev, time-shifts mean that the deaths of Ophreus and his beloved Eudice are presented several times in different ways. By Act 3, "The Terrible Death" and "Third Mystical Air" can be hard to track. NHC gave up trying to produce a simplified libretto, and the three disc set comes with a copy of Zinoviev's original in the last worst way of following the opera.

That's the down side. But the most exciting aspect of this recording is the remainder of how the dazzling electronic interludes are integrated into the performance. In an unusual collaboration with the composer, Barry Anderson (with the help of iRCAM) created original sound textures permeated with Brinstowe's own style. The "Allegorical Flowers Of Reason" and "Passing Clouds Of Abandon" (those titles...) are mime interludes featuring spectrally analysed and resynthesised recordings of a harp. The results are alternately eerie and violent. Throughout the action, shimmering surfs make up an electronically created backdrop.

The suspicion grows that Harrison Birtwistle is one of the really major composers of the century, of the stature of Stockhausen, Boulez and Messiaen. Unlike those figures, however, it's taken a long time for the realization to dawn: This extraordinary recording of his *The Most of Orpheus*, despite its problematic nature as an opera, strengthens that belief.

ANDY HAMILTON

**Ran Blake & Anthony
Braxton**

A Memory Of Vienna
Hardcover \$66.00

**Ellery Eskelin/Andrea
Parkins/Jim Black**
One Great Day

One Great Day
HATFIELD 503.60

Hæcology boss Werner Uehlinger's notes to his new series of releases make pragmatic if slightly melancholy reading. The discs are limited pressings, cast in the face of an

increasingly impossible industry. So, "in response to the rising costs and increased difficulty in selling back catalogue numbers from stores with shrinking floor space and little interest in long-term product," Warner has chosen smart print runs and limited shelf-life. The boutique collaborations are inescapable, and maybe that's appropriate on the *Black & Blue* edition disc, which is one of those occasions which scarcely merits more than a passing glance or a cup of espresso. The result of two hours of spare studio time in 1988, the players more or less ditch their way through eight frankly odd and/or too-familiar tunes which they leave thought of anything other than "a little bit of a joke." *Black & Blue*. Actually, *Black & Blue* is so superb as "Soul on Ice," his opening chorus on "You Go To My Head," which is like a little tour through 20th century composition, is worth having for that. The problem is Brandon. He adopts the doleful tone and ponderous phrasing he always seems to sink into when he plays standards, and he really seems prone for any adequate response to Blake's sticky touch

The other record is something else. Estélin continues to grow, with several very strong records already under his belt: he's a saxophone player who loves the sound of the horn and when he warms up on a solo, you can hear a lot of greasy, gutbucket licks transformed into an uncompromising Polka awareness. He can pop any leftfield setting he wants, but when he plays Roland Kirk (as he does here on "The Initiated Teal") he sounds just as much at home. Parkins does wheezy electrified ecceadon and plays piano on her sampler, while Black is like a slightly nuttier Joy Baron. They are a great trio, and because they're serious about their humour, they can create some amazingly moving music next to a madcap episode. If the most impressive thing is actually Estélin's

compositional sense: even when they're open-ended, he gives each of these pieces a cogent shape and substance. Limited to 2500 copies. Get yours today.

RICHARD COOK

Terry Callier
Timescape

TALON, SOLID TOLUENE CD

The resurrection and subsequent second soul-wind of folk-jazz conifer Terry Callier has been one of the most unexpected blows against fate of the past few years. Long consigned to late night Northern Soul haunts and the vaults of rare vinyl dealers, his recording history is pretty tough to put together. Recently, though, he's re-surfaced in the most unlikely of places: the backside of Bitch Beats' Best Hits EP blowing Fred Neil's "Dolphins" to bits, while heavyweights like Tortoise have been singing out his praises to anyone who'll listen.

In fact, he's been active since the early '60s, recording 1964's *New Folk Sound*, among many other albums and singles, before

recording a trio of heavyweight players for the legendary Cadet label in the early 70s (*Occasional Rain, What Colour Is Love and I Just Can't Help Myself*). Burnt out by bad industry politics and general indifference, he decided to call it a day, but not before blowing his own money on one final recording session in 1983. Then he got a job programming computers to bring up his daughter.

That would have been the end of the story, had it not been for the efforts of Acid Jazz, who released Calver's "I Don't Want To See Myself Without You" in '91, and Adrian Gibson of London's Jazz Cafe, who tracked him down to his workplace to offer him a gig in '94.

All of which brings us to *Timepiece*, a collection of new soul-barking, mystic folk dissonance given a slight space-jazz, sign Caller buzzsaws acoustic guitar masterfully, and at its best his mumble-chews words like prime Dylan, complete with the latter's efflorescent phrasing and epic verse courts. The cooing "Ride Suite Ride" is a deadringer for Nick Drake circa *By Your Side*; its resonances lightly bolstered with some 66 Hammond, though Caller's mercurial intonation recalls Curtis Mayfield (Caller actually went to school with Mayfield and Jerry Butler) or even Van Morrison, loose and free.

"Lazarus Man" is undoubtedly the album's centrepiece, with circularly picked acoustics hovering over the sounds of humming water and fretless bass, while Collier talks resurrection until words can no longer express what he's after, leaving him moaning and humming to the close. Further in, though, alarm bells start ringing as some schmalzy female vocals intrude as the raggedy edges of "Keep Your Heart Right". Even the presence of the mighty Pharos Sanders flustering around his shoulders on the title track can't quell the feeling that a little less production would have improved the record.

But when Collier's alone in space, as on the beautiful "Love Scene From Spartacus," he really cuts to the heart, dipping strings like Bert Jansch and his voice matching Scott Walker melancholia for melancholia.

DAVID STEINAM

The Dead C

Task

49. TOXICITY CLASS (70)

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

On Tuzi (New Zealand's) *The Dead C* forsake riffage and momentum for a series of bleary, sonically dense free improvisations. Although such *Freeband Mac* fans inspired by the tide might gain some solace from Robbie Nye's occasional 60-second bursts of gunshot snare elsewhere, *The Dead C* noise remains beautifully unshuffled. When a lick in the eye for anyone who still even vaguely casts them as some low-lob of stumble-rockers. For sure, the fidelity isn't exactly *78*—indeed, it's positively damaged—but whether out of economic necessity or aesthetic choice (and I'd plump for the latter), the distressed sound cloaks the whole in an eerie ode-of-the-

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The Wayward
And on the Seventh Day...



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world ghost light that is uniquely theirs.

The 11-minute "Purge" locks off the record in suitably out-style with the rattle of brushes sounding like a detuned take on Harry Patch's *Intrusions* before slipping into some beautifully understated guitar "trade-offs." "Head" starts off precariously, with guitars Michael Morley and Bruce Russell pulling away from each other, one grappling intensively with a single string while the other wrecks with an overhead amp until the drums crash in on them, forcing the whole lot over the top. "Tuba" cuts straight to the point with 90 seconds that border on coherence, in the shape of a hammered riff that sounds like Tony Williams Lifetime rehearsing a block away. Vocal interjections are few and virtually unrecognizable, more textural disruption than actual singing. "Tusk" roars forward off the set with the players going all out in several different directions. Every repeated spin turns up something different every time you hear it, for music this played is impossible to recall until you're right in the middle of it.

The Dead C have taken on the legacy of decades of freedom play and acted on it with nothing but a cassette recorder and a set of beamed up instruments. The resulting disc's overwhelming sense of bloodpumping urgency makes it a simultaneously exhausting and exhilarating listening experience.

DAVID KIRKMAN

Fushitsusha Fushitsusha Live 1 RS 1950-3-2820

When it was originally released as a limited double vinyl set in 1989, Fushitsusha's live debut had become the holy grail for those who had tuned into the Japanese psychedelic underground. Housed in a completely black gatefold cover with accompanying black labels on the records themselves, this artifact looked the business before it even reached the turntable. At first glance it resembled The Velvet Underground's *White Light/White Heat*, but there was also something indisputably alive here, too, as though the barely discernible, black varnished Japanese lettering that crawled down the cover and seeped through to the (for non-Japanese readers) unintelligible lyric sheet inside was festering from the bottom pages of some forbidden book of magic.

This CD version of *Fushitsusha Live 1* succeeds in reclaiming that same sense of wonder (only in miniature). Its seductive package will hopefully exert its pull on a whole new audience for leader Jay Hama's pitched up Plink! music. Over its 150 minute assault on the senses, Fushitsusha shifts gears from 60s stoned sonic bombardment to No Wave nuclear meltdown. Although the sound of the group is less defined here than on later experiments, the atmospheric cradle with electric mind. Listening to Live 1, you can almost imagine Fushitsusha adapting the mantle of a gothic Quicksilver Messenger

Service, playing a sparsely attended gig at San Francisco's Fillmore East during the height of Flower Power. Outside the sun is burning down on happy souls, while within the cavernous concert hall Fushitsusha are unwelcoming a yet that vibrates the bones of their audience and quakes the already crumbling foundations of rock 'n' roll salt subject. Beyond rock, beyond improvisation, this music boils over and floods the soul with an intensity that will either instantly convert or send you screaming from the room. Nearly ten years on, there's still little that can rival the mystical musical force of this black beauty.

EDWIN POUCHET

Philip Glass Kundun WGED 101 70380 CD

Marin Scorsese says that, for him, the images in *Kundun*, his film about the Dalai Lama, no longer stand on their own without Glass's music. I have not seen the movie yet, so the music has to stand on its own. Which is as it should be. Scorsese's enthusiasm is well merited. This is the most magical work Glass has done for quite a while.

Glass is committed to Buddhism and loves Tibetan culture. He is also a big film buff. He regards himself as a thespian and a film composer rather than a writer of "pure" music, and his compositions for the stage (he has epic operas) and soundtrack are emotionally affecting in a variety of ways that his concert works rarely achieved. The scores for *Thin Blue Line*, *Millions* and *Boyz n the City* are spellbinding even when divorced from the images; indeed, they are so potent that they effortlessly conjure images independent of the films. The music of *Kundun* is of a similar standard.

Glass seduces us with his familiar repertoire of undulating ostinato accompaniments, stepwise melodies which seem to float weightlessly in space or water, slow-motion spirals and even slower long-breathed counter-melodies. At first hearing his inclusion of Tibetan horns, shamans and elements from the Buddhist liturgy startle, but they are quickly absorbed into Glass's soundworld. There is, of course, nothing really new, nothing really surprising. That is entirely appropriate, since Eastern artistic and religious traditions avoid self-asserting individual expression, working instead towards a melding of subject and object, worshiper and worshipped.

Moral idealism (or obsession, depending on your viewpoint) is a consistent thread in Glass's work. Tibet's spiritual leader joins a roster which has included Akhnaten, Gandhi, Mahatma, and, closing just as fiercely for their integrity, Beauty and the Beast, Staggering timescapes and belated of inconceivable age also seem central concerns, whether seen through the eyes of the Haps, the Egyptians, the Shikastas, the Tibetans or Einstein. Glass's unliking music imperceptibly contemplates this temporal abyss.

BARRY WITHERSON

Jack Kerouac

Readings By Jack Kerouac On The Beat Generation
VSR 51 453 575 74 CD

This is the CD release of a spoken word album recorded and originally released in 1958, before the former All-American football contender-cum Beat hero chameleon had turned into a good old boy baron big bad-mouthed hippies and pinko commie lags for what they'd done to his America.

In truth, his America was long gone before the hippies started hitting the roads, mugged out on his Beat bible *On The Road*. That novel (and film) had not yet burnt out the big heart that made him such a beautiful rhapsodist of both the continent and the moments crossing it. As a spoken word performer, he never

developed the vocal delivery or punch lines of his Beat brother William S. Burroughs, nor did he have the boisterous confidence or conviction of his greatest champion, the poet-jazzologist Allen Ginsberg. Indeed, hearing this haphazardly packaged and annotated CD (reissue 40 years on, when today's commercial demands force upon writers the need to perform, the tentative nature of his delivery is quite a surprise. Before the mic he seems overcome by the smallest Catholic shyness that he would later down in cheap wine. He certainly doesn't sound like the thrilly wild Kerouac character in his own *Dharma Gums*, who belated encouragement to fellow poet-writers in a thinly veiled reenactment of the famous San Francisco Six Gallery night, when Beat performance came of age. But once the leads flow through him and he's warmed by the enthusiasm that lived him originally to write, his performances are deeply affecting, and then all the more so for their stammering naturalness. Hear him on "The History Of Bob" and the extract from *The Subterraneans* to experience the burn of the music at the moment of its creation. But for Kerouac's spontaneous top prosody, as defined by Ginsberg, listen to the hair-raising burblings from *San Francisco Blues*, or *Lucan Midnight* (the *Sounds Of The Universe At My Window*, where the satons of the gods survive the slight embarrassment of the author having to speak them out loud).

The disc's crowning moment is the lengthy extract from *Visions Of God*. This was Kerouac's most complex novel, something like an X-ray of *On The Road*, in which he seemingly sought to describe in the truest detail the everyday America of crime movies, smoky dens and brownstones visited by his hero Neal Cassidy as a child. But most of this extract is taken up by a blow-by-blow reenactment of The Three Stooges, where the death of Kerouac's absorption in the subject is as sweetly moving as The Three Stooges are unfunny (yet they were always horribly watchable). Even they had a place in the lost America Kerouac's writings recapitulated. Only when his rapture turned to mourning its loss did Kerouac sensually lose the plot.

BILL KOPP

Charles Mingus

Puente Of A Man: The Complete Atlantic Recordings 1958-1961
RINO ATLANTIC JAZZ GALLERY RD 10872 GRC

Snug in a smooth and stately locale: the two hardbound volumes. One is a 120 page book of essays, photographs, track-by-track commentary, sessionography, personnel bios and colour reproductions of the original LP covers Charles Mingus released on the Atlantic label at the tail-end of the 1950s. The other, holding six CDs, is a miniature replica of the weighty cardboard "albums" that housed sets of shellac 78rpm discs before the introduction of the 33rpm LP. This is the kind of artful presentation that wins design awards.

However, because of the anti-artiness of the CD format — after all, only commercial constraints prevent this digital data being squeezed down a phone line or copied onto a floppy — the box set carries a distinct whiff of kitsch. The deluxe patchwork of the packaging nullifies the historic impact of Mingus's original releases. Now that vinyl crackle and Dances to a-Li are being reassessed for their hip connotations, maybe Mingus's original vinyl LPs will emerge as the true objects d'art? What did a Mingus record mean first time round?

In the interview with producer Hesluis Etiquan that fills disc six — from late 1961 or early 1962 — Mingus declares it's clear that the so-called war between the races was really caused by the "economical set-up of the system". Here the turning, politically-driven bass player has been boxed like a classic, but his sounds still scorch the ears. The set comprises *Rheocephalus Erectus* (56), *The Clown* (57), *Blues & Roots* (60), *Oh Yeah* (62), *Tonight At Noon* (64) (a collection of leftovers from the *Clown* and *Oh Yeah* sessions now sequenced among their tracks) and *Mingus Live At Antibes 1961* (79). Inclusion of *Word From Bird* — a 1956 LP by silky-smooth bebop Teddy Charles with Mingus on bass — provides a foil to Mingus's rhapsodic eruptions. Previously unreleased are four alternate takes from *Blues & Roots*. Throughout, tracks appear in their original recording sequence, though alternate takes are wisely clustered at the end of discs, avoiding the annoyance of a tune finishing only to be directly reprised. To regain a sense of Mingus's original intent, I eventually resorted to gluing stickers with the original LP titles onto each disc. Listeners who like to find out instantly who's playing what will also find the presentation frustrating. The data's there, but you need to keep flipping to different sections of the damned book. In the right hands, vinyl wasn't just political dynamite, it was also a tool of co-ordination between sight and sound. Fact and music.

Danite Richmond drums on most of this, while the sax players include Eric Dolphy, John Handy and Jackie McLean (post-bop's premium alto) and Booker Ervin, Roland Kirk and Shafi Hadi (all mean tenors). Annotator Andrew Homzy's sole exaggeration is to say that Mingus introduced "form and style" to "staunch avant gardists" like Dolphy. Can

Horsey unearth any Dolphy that is not an object lesson in both? Otherwise, Homzy's discussion — pointing out how dependent so-called free jazz was on Mingus's careful orchestrations of gospel and urban chaos — is excellent. "A Foggy Day" was indeed the essential precursor for both Ornette's *Free Jazz* and Dolphy's *Out To Lunch*.

The original LPs may grant insights, but it's not the whole picture. The clear sound of CD elevates Mingus's bass above the rumble of vinyl's surface noise, his nimbleness and invention and funk are gobsmacking. Intelligent bass began right here, Metahead and current club trends both only make Mingus sound still more compelling. However, that may simply make a case for picking up the individual CD releases of these epochal albums.

Back in 1993, Mosaic issued a box set of Mingus's 1959 recordings for CBS. Critics Michael Gusana and Brian Presley made claims that, given the set's limited compositional brief, seemed overblown. Here, Mingus's own release schedule triumphs over the packaging, and the music sounds great. Not great as in Duke Ellington — having lost its vulgar mandate, post-war jazz was flawed by art archness — but great because of its bold outlines and all-questioning social consciousness.

BILL WATSON

Virgil Moorefield

The "Temperature In Hell Is Over 3000 Degrees"
TASCAR T70203 CD

"One thing that tends to confuse people is that I like music of all shapes," states Virgil Moorefield, who is best known for his drumming with Glenn Branca (Bill Laswell and Elton Sharp). But his work as composer and leader shows a wider remit. His first album, *Transformations*, appeared in 1983 and several other albums have been squeezed out between his stints with Hardcore groups. Given how he subscribes to John Zorn's credo that "all music are equal," his appearance on the latter's *Tzadik* label seems right.

If people find Moorefield's music difficult to pin down, it's not hard to hear why. Best to start with that old standby, influences. He nameschecks early King Crimson, Zappa, Philip Glass, and of course, given his own role as the bandleader's "violent drummer", Glenn Branca. *The Temperature In Hell*, featuring himself on synthesizer and his drummerless ensemble, "blends Hinduism, medieval tunings and improvisation," he says.

King Crimson were his first introduction to "odd time, orchestral guitars, malevolent sounds... twisted little melodic cells." Those are found on *The Temperature In Hell* though the guitars — Woody Pak on fretless, bowed guitar by Tim Otto — are more chamber than orchestral. The title is taken from a series of Day Of Reckoning posters that appeared near Moorefield's apartment. The opening is violent,



Parklife: Mark Hollis

Mark Hollis

Mark Hollis
Polydisc 33 7688 CD

The spotlight falls on a singer at the piano marking out restrained emotional chords. Not a million miles from the start of any moody romantic rock ballad — whether John Mitchell or Elton John. But the eight songs here drift into strange melodic expansions. Woodwind and other acoustic instruments obligingly touch in spectral emotional impressions round the singer's halting whispers. A Miles Davis-inspired trumpet line injects a muted emotional comment, a harmonica creates faint kaleidoscopic flares out of the merest shiver. Only acoustic instruments are used and these are mixed to catch the breathless tremor of sound. The first solo release by Mark Hollis after his days as front man for Talk Talk represents the timbral and melodic expansion of the rock ballad into a symphonic tone poem. REM for Radio 3 listeners.

I hate to use the word "haunting" to describe a piece of music, because I don't believe in ghosts. And yet, there are ghosts that can dog the feedback loops of self-expression: ghosts of past events that call up familiar resigned responses, ghosts of unfulfilled wishes, feared and longed for, that race every time one veers from a habitual path. These are the kind of shivers that hover round the music here. The disc has so many twists and turns you think you're on track 20 by the time you've reached number five.

The sounds are thick and warm, but there's enough Sadesque pause and pause for it not to turn lush. No sentimental mush. On tracks like "The Watershed" and "The Gift" a greater stendry comes not from the pomp of rock but subtly sedwinding beats, undulating double bass notes and jangling ride cymbals.

Otherwise the phrases are so tentative and full of unexpected transitions and returns, it's impossible to predict where each chord will settle. Indeed, the music regularly disappears altogether. Strummed riffs peter out into atonal woodwind passages. "A Life (1895-1915)" winds out a line of crisp but folksy phrases, reminiscent of Tom Waits's orchestrations, but what's sketched in around it are the barest fragments of melodic phrases — almost Cagean futterings and random emphases.

And throughout, the album, underpinning its emotional explorations, are Hollis's vocals — as quavery as a bamboo flute, and so self-effacing and inward he could be singing the lyrics backwards. If you caught the last two Talk Talk albums you'll have some idea of what to expect. If not, Hollis's haunted soul is worth checking out by anyone ever-touched by the voices of singers such as John Martyn or David Sylvian.

PAUL FRYTCH



High and dry: Harry Partch

Harry Partch

The Harry Partch Collection Volumes 1-4
(SRJ51752/53/54/55-4000)

Although the name Harry Partch is familiar to anyone remotely interested in the evolution of 20th-century American music, he remains a shadowy figure, more myth than man. His recordings have until now been difficult to obtain. His most important work was originally issued on his own Gale 5 Records, a one-man operation which, like Sun Ray's B Saturn venture, produced only small quantities of each title, and all of them were quickly snapped up by subscribers to his Harry Partch Trust Fund. Because they were barely published in the wider world, few outsiders got to know Partch the composer, or that he had invented a collection of 30 musical instruments to play his compositions in the unique tuning he devised for them. His "Monophonic system" scored the octave into 43 pitches.

Partch's scores demanded a very physical approach, the personality he stamped into the instruments he built, such as the chromelodeon (an adapted reed organ with six keyboard octaves, to which all his other instruments were tuned), the litlira (an instrument based on the Greek lyre), and the cloud chamber bow (a set of 12 suspended Pyrex carbons with their bottoms cut away to form balls) ensured that the

players had a tactile bond with the music; they were performing. Also beautiful to look at, Partch's instruments were as much sculptures as sound generators.

To the oddly crafted, visually arresting ensemble Partch added jazz players — whose skill at bending notes he incorporated into his work — and himself as the lead vocalist. His curious blend of eccentric showmanship, craftsmanship and love of theatrics, coupled with a deep-rooted knowledge of American and World Musics, produced a body of work that, long after his death in 1974, still sounds astonishing. And the passing of time hasn't rendered its slightly alien qualities any more familiar. Even though the musics of Tom Waits and Captain Beefheart have paid homage to Partch, both the man and his music remains a mystery to many.

CDs sensitively packaged, informative Harry Partch Collection needs, and deserves, careful listening. Those who do so will discover a truly original American voice. The first four CDs in the series draw on Partch's Gale 5 archive. Volume One consists of three compositions from the early 50s. The first, *Eleven Inventions* (1949-50), is a series of prose verses by diverse individuals, sung by Partch in a bosteros voice to the accompaniment of a quartet of players, plus his own soft, vibrant hammering of the cloud chamber bowls. These 11 musical miniatures are a natural extension of the earlier "Ten Settings Of Lyrics By U Po", only this time Oriental inflections have been transformed into a sound that can justly be described as American gamelan. Originally released as a set of five 78 rpm discs, these rare recordings provide a valuable insight into Partch's early years. As does the complete version of *Altoza And Percussion Dances: Satyr-Play Music For Dance Theater*, the composer's first large-scale composition which allowed his instrumental invention full rein. Here Greek myth, his own insane text and Pindaric verse are introduced to his elegant organic numbers, as his sturdily built orchestra of wood, glass and steel begins to stretch its musical muscles. The first work, entitled "Ulysses At The Edge" (originally written for trumpeter Chet Baker) is an equally dramatic and economic sounding small chamber piece, where saxophones and Partch's army of bamboo members collide to tell an ancient tale which he also

relates, somehow, to his own personal history.

The second volume chronicles what Partch called his "personal Great Depression", when for eight years he, like Ulysses, was forced to live the life of a wanderer. His *hobo* period came to an end when in 1943 he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, finally enabling him to become a full-time composer. But Partch never forgot the experience, and four of Volume Two's five pieces (known collectively as *The Wayward*) relate his hobo existence in words, music, memory and nightmare. It's organized as a series of stunningly arranged flashbacks that effectively recapture his past while advancing his musical vision into the future. And *On The Seventh Day Petals Fell In Petaluma* (consisting of 23 one-minute duets and trios) was written and performed in the early 60s. In the context of these discs, it marks a giant leap forward, the first composition on which the Gale 5 disciples push the sonic possibilities of their master's various sound sculptures to the very edge. *Petals* is a breathtaking example of Partch's genius, where all his musical discs and obsessions burst into bloom. For new listeners especially, here's where the Partch revival suddenly starts to make sense.

Volume Three unearths Partch's so-called "aesthetic of corporality" where music was joined to dance, film and even gymnastics to push the composer's vision into different creative dimensions. *On Aloha The Body In All Its Phases* (written with a stopwatch while studying the rhythms of gymnasts on a trampoline) the feeling is almost rock 'n' roll, as the percussion rolls out and the chorus of voices below along with the staccato, somewhat exhausting rhythm, which could almost be an out-take from Frank Zappa's twisted *Thing Fish*. The same comparison could be applied to his dissonant theatre work *Wozza! Wozza!*, which shows Partch at his silliest, with daydreams of Broadway glory flitting at the back of his mind. *The Bewitched* (which like all of Volume Four), however, was one of Partch's more successful stabs at musical theatre. This epic "satyr-play, seeking satire, whimsy, magic and ribaldry" was more solidly constructed to make it along with the still unavailable *Deeds Of The Fury* one of Partch's most enduring works.

EDWIN POUNCEY

Anderson-style Minimalism with clockwork polyrhythms. The second section is the closest to Ambient, dominated by the composer's synthesizer washes — but meloncolia tangents on cele and bowed guitar give a rougher edge. As usual, monotony comes across as a kind of dissonance.

In essence, this is Ivy League avant-garde (Hofstadter denied philosophy at Columbia and is now in Princeton) But the result is an original mix of academic and downtown, a lozong experience which, as you'd expect from Tzadik, nests easy categorisation.

ANDY HAMILTON

Multiphonic Ensemble

King Of Mix
SRJ5054 SRJ5055

Small Fish With Spine

Ultimate Suzhi
CDJC 00001 CD

Far from the power spots of the breakfast deserts, Duke based producer Yoshio Haruo, aka Multiphonic Ensemble, has opened a starting new sonic spectrum. His rhythms are breakneck but they're animated by gliding latices. Transient tones are

sustained into stretched skeins of eth dimensional sound that bend into a glasslike glutascopy. "Haphaz 3" exemplifies this procedure. The beat is enlarded by four tones that twang like the pitchbending guitar in the opening episode of Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom*. In "Rumble Fish", a symphonic chord starts out attacking, then suddenly drops as if The Boston Philharmonic had just been relocated to the Dalek suburbs of the Paranoid-critical Town. At one spectrum of pitch alteration there's the Paranoid's nausea and Luke Volt's queasiness. Haruo's sounds are neither sneaky nor seasickening, instead

they're seamless and confounding, trapping the dynamics of rhythm in a tipping Klargate of triangle and vibraphones until you lose all sense of where the track's going. The *King Of Mix* would be even stronger if Haruo's rhythmic science was as extreme as its total modulation.

As Small Fish With Spine, London based producer Rix Huston similarly derailses tracklines by setting her mix CD *Ultimate Suzhi* in the twilight kingdom of electric jazz. Four Play and Funk Kool's mournful horns and formless syntharmonic tones generate mirage moods that shift emotions.

incredibly until you doubt what you're hearing. She conflates the tenors she's raised with a powerful sense of antipathetic nostalgia, a sensation of looking back on nights yet to come. Maizen keeps the beatcloud sustain of electric jazz, but jitters its tense, nervous orchestral attacks. Unlike the ominous drift of much music inspired by Miles and Placero, her bass pressure and sprightly gap isolate and interlock at the same time. By shifting the weight of the rhythm up and around the virtual drum kit, Maizen avoids the leadenotated gap of instrumental HipHop, opting instead for the barbed wire distortion and screaming middle in high frequencies of *Big Beat* on "High Five." Here too Maizen scores, bringing an emotional mobility to a usually on-edge sound.

Keywords

Music Revelation Ensemble

Cross Fire
the great CP

It's taken James' 'Blood Umm' a long time to make his Music Revue Ensemble really work. Saxophonist David Murray might be widely thought of as some kind of flumekeeper for all that's right and proper in contemporary acoustic jazz, but I'd argue his half-hearted contributions to HRE held the group back. Over the last few years Ummr has reduced the group to a basic guitar-drum-bass power trio, albeit augmented with such cameos, as in 1996's *Knights Of Power*. Drummer Cornell Rochester has been with HRE since 1950's *Electric Jazz*, but bassist Anne Ali has been replaced with Callen 'Nassen' Trufi. James: They're a ferocious trio, the most full-on line-up of the HRE yet. Rochester and James' bandstand magic is the real presence in the music, the gritty and groovy, the 'swinging' Captain Blackbird is on great form. As the years go by, Ummr's trajectory is the very opposite of most players, his playing is ever more simple, more pared down and savage. The trio is joined on four cuts each by Pharoah Sanders and John Zorn, who turn a loose session into a blazing one.

Ulmer isn't exactly forging new paths any more, but this is as satisfying as the best of his records from the last 15 years, and probably as fine a slice of interstellar blues as you'll hear all year.

Omit

Quad
CORPUS HERMITICUM HERMES 34/05/06 2000

Omit is Clinton Williams of Blenheim, New Zealand, who for the past decade has been nailed inside a windowless bedroom inventing and playing primitive electronic generators and kiddie synthesizers which pay scant attention to the contemporary soundworld

Occasionally he'd send out an international mislike via his own Deep Skin Conceptual Mind Music cassette label, but until now it's pretty far to say his profile has erred towards invisibility, despite amassing a fairly bulky back catalogue. Hopefully this beautifully presented box set will go some way towards rectifying this state of affairs.

Quaid originally showed up as two CSO cassettes on his own label some time around 1994. Its three-hour running time allowed for the first full integration of all of Williams's disparate interests. Utilising his various field recordings compiled over the years (in shopping malls, naked in the bath, "walking the dog") and combining these with some choice antique synths and self-constructed tone generators, he set out to make his grand statement.

Now, thanks to Corpus Hermeticum's Bruce Russell, this unique document of skewed outsider genius can be heard in its complete form for the first time, remixed from the cassette release and spread over three CDs. The box set also contains a set of prints of Williams's bizarre drawings and compulsive diametric pen and pencil planetscapes, populated by dilated pupils and surreal insect-like shapes, which he explains as an attempt to visualise his sound.

Quaid divides into eight units, each of them made up of separate pieces with titles like "Resected From Despair (Lost At The Opening From A Location Without Breathing)", and all of them based on the concept of charting "a journey through an individual consciousness profoundly at odds with the cosmos." In other words we're talking autobiography.

Quad is a three dimensional psychosis, a study of the modern world's daily assault on the individual and a detour through a phantasmagoria. Scenes flash past, the beating of frizzled electronics slowly engulfs voices broadcast from distant loudspeakers, synth-grunt phlegm soaks into the walls. Like the world of Philip K. Dick, music sound, the veneer of consensus reality constantly threatens to slip away at any moment, bombarding the individual psyche with alien transmissions and disorientating stabs of dissonant noise.

This is a major document of one of the greatest outsider artists currently working the field. As it's limited to 700 copies, you'd be well advised to get it quick before it disappears forever.

DAVID KIPPAN

**Evan Parker & Eddie
Prévost**

Most Material
MATCHLESS 1993-2000

That's "Platonist" with double L. The antique spelling reflects Evan Parker's current inspiration, 17th century philosopher and scientist Francis Bacon. The title of each track is a quote from Bacon, of which "Knowledge is Power" is the best known. "Rejecting Simple

Enumeration⁷ expresses Bacon's pioneering technique of induction, the basis of scientific method (A seasonal note — Bacon experimented with preserving chickens in snow, and died of a chill as a result.)

Even Parker has recorded highly regarded duos with drummers John Slivers and longtime partner Paul Lytton, but this looks like the first with Eddie Prévost. Recorded on two dates in 1997 — the latter entirely on tenor sax — the double album features some uncompromising free improv.

Its metaphysical aspirations prompt comparison with Coltrane and Rashied Ali's *Intervallor Space*. This places *Most Material* in the jazz tradition, and Eddie Prevost is regarded as being in the lineage of Miles Roach and Ed Blackwell. In fact there's even a moment, at the end of "Skill Gave Rise To Chance", when the duo almost slip into orthodox swing time. But the Korean court musician side to Prevost's playing — heretic, contemplative — is also evident. His bowing on metal produces some rich sonorities.

The album perhaps has a more premeditated feel than many of Parker's recordings. But maybe it's just that organic development comes easier when there are only two partners. Parker's strength of tone and instrumental command are consistent. Listening to some of his recordings can be an emotionally draining experience. That's not so here, where there's plenty of contrast, with playing that combines confidence and grace.

"Not So Much For The Sake Of Arguing" is a towering performance, a call and response, kind of, between tenor sax and drums. Some of the "turkey gobbling" noises sound like they're produced by slap-tonguing — a vaudeville technique that penetrated jazz saxophone before Coleman Hawkins liberated the instrument. "Let Us Attend To Present Business" achieves a contrast, as many tracks do, through Eddie Prevost's concentration on different parts of the kit here, mallets on tom-toms, followed by cymbals as in Billy Higgins's famous work on Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz*. The result is more restrained despite the fluency of the tenor lines.

The soprano workouts seem less individual — but I'm not a great fan of circular breathing though this is an effect Evan obviously wants in his armoury. Most Horneball is as adventurous an improv set as anything from the 60s and 70s. And if it's not as radical as his earlier ECM release, it's still Evan Parker at his greatest and most formidable.

ANDY HAMILTON

Pieces

I Need Five Minutes Alone
EVANT RAMONA.CO

Just like the man in the song "A Boy Named Sue", the American guitar geek wearing the upturned fried chicken pal called Buckethead presumably chose to go through life under such an alias as a barroom challenge to all

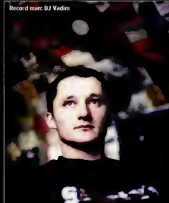


DJ Vadim
USSR Reconstruction
VINYL TUNE ZN31 CD

DJ Vadim continues to defy the lazy conventions of beathead culture by delivering a remix project which not only remains true to the queering spirit of the original *USSR Repertoire*, released earlier this year) but is consistently excellent in its own right. Fueled by Vadim's interest in musique concrète — and his vast haul of sonic obscurities — *USSR Repertoire* was a sparse revelation which imbued snatches of sound (creaking door hinges, the smack and shiver of antique vinyl) with genuine musicality. This "reconstruction" goes one further: It's as if the nine-month gestation period was a marathon, and the resulting music arrives imbued to its core with tangy, fulsome emotion.

Danish dark horses The Prunes deliver a reworking of "Conquest Of The Irrational" that is little short of awesome. Mashed bowed cellos unite behind a melody that has the querulous charm of vintage Morricone, while the pure logic synthfunk of the surprise code as if this is convincing a chunk of beathead ravers to make any I've come across *USSR Reconstruction* is littered with such gems. Kevin Martin casts "Lord Forgive Me" into a gallop of high snare slurs and tubular snares, while The Herbs introduce panicky vocal enunciations and elderly cello exhalations to a fluid French rap. The slow 1-2-3-4 count in Russian bringing the mix to its close is repeated until every creak and crack in the voice becomes a microcosm part of the rhythm track.

Although there's nothing as naïvely, nakedly experimental as "Melodies In Hinge Creek" from *Repertoire* here, a couple of tracks reflect Vadim's leftfield inspirations. Oval provide an indicative but idiosyncratic electroacoustic interlude, while Vadim himself (together with The Sycophants) tries out balking,



Record man: DJ Vadim

altered struggles, prepared piano arpeggios and harsh scratching on the reworked "Melodies In Verbal Theory."

Vadim is a notoriously disaffected producer, and most of the tracks here are clearly improved by his austere vision. The last track, though, creeping forward in a cannibal's torpor, opens up to admit lush, lazy hedonism: The Silent Poets leave us with a veritable rainforest of sound, harmonic tendrils creeping inexorably around a spring snare and two chord motif. This luxurious exhalation is pure bliss, and it suitably rounds off one of the best, and most coherent remix projects of recent months.

CHRIS SHARP

comes, daring them to laugh at him. Well, if the ridicule toughened up his playing, any, then the raw worked a triumph: his music his like a sedulous preacher's revelation.

Dumb as he looks, he can actually play — as, I suppose, his earlier invitation to Derek Bailey's Company Week, and the patronage of both Bill Linnell and John Zorn has already amply proven. If anything, he can play too much, for the one annoying factor about this set is his occasional junior prom grandstanding, when he's actually getting the applause of his audience; his presentation otherwise seems to mock, by showing off all the styles he's capable of. Neither do the guest raps, nor the strangled vowels of one Herbie add much to this disc other than the occasional bushy goad of colour.

The best of *I Need Five Minutes Alone*, however, which accounts for some two thirds of it, mostly has Buckhead smudging wiggling dirty guitar and bass tunes, with pieces partner brain stamping out drum accompaniment with all the joy of a regressed US carmaker bearing on his upturned and emptied pot with a grossly human drumstick. Much of what they do is

somehow redolent of bored smalltown Westerners getting off on Texas Chainsaw Massacre at some random drive-in [well, Buckhead's instrumental armory does include a cattle prod].

In the description 'too stupid for words, maybe, and indeed if you turn your nose up at the likes of The Burthole Surfers, then you're probably better off heading back to Kansas, Dorothy. Like the Surfers, Pieces are fired on the gaseous energy of guitar decay, yet their music similarly sheers away from bonded rock, constantly taking unexpected turns, albeit down devilish paths, especially when the Pieces pair sound like they've taken to bashing each other. At one point Brian ripples rollers of beats from something like a toy drum machine under the feet of the guitarist's great leaden stomp paces, sending him reeling the way and that, before switching to hammering out basic practice patterns on a bare drum kit to help him regain his balance.

The boy sat standing done good, that's for sure. His life must be proud of him — provided he's not already hanging upside down flayed in Buckhead's lair.

BILL KOFF

Porter Ricks

Porter Ricks
HUE PLATAUB/PCMD32 CDLP

Gas

Zauberberg
HUE PLATAUB/PCMD35 CDLP

Various Artists

Decay Product
CHAM REACTION CD303 CD

Monolake

Hongkong
CHAM REACTION CD304 CD

The music on these four German CDs is pure electronics, but as beautiful, distant, esoteric and insistent as skywriting. From his elongated gong recordings to his new accommodation in the Porter's lodge, Thomas Kner tests the parameters of dub's liquid photography with delicacy and imagination. The music is full of gas, air, bubbles, reactions. Of the five miles of "Redundance" on the off: "Redundance 5" stakes out the rhythmic terrain with a jazz shuffle, then crushes it with a solarized

piano cluster that profoundly blue "Verson" drops the beat out and zooms in on the scouring swarms of buzzing, fizzing synthesis that threaten to shiver the whole thing to pieces. And what's with that wail-wail guitar?

Zauberberg is the second album by Cologne Mike Linkin Gas-ous mode (although the credits reveal his real name, Wolfgang Vogt). Fiers of the muffled best sequences of 1995's Gas won't be disappointed by this solemn, majestic cruise towards the German East. The model here must be Thomas Mann's *Hug*; Mountain (for Zauberberg), an immense novel whose young protagonist reaches saton in the thir, reeking Alpine air in a sanatorium balcony Vogt's wood-muffled throbs roll past like galaxies from a forest road, backed by looped samples from German orchestral juggernauts (Bruchner, Wagner and Schoenberg are namechecked), vinyl crackles intact. By juxtaposing these ethereal, Romantic strings with Techno's boot-ba-ba, he gives back to the German road something of the suspension and sweeter qualities of the pilgrim route — traits passed over by Kraftwerk's utopian hymn to the Autobahn.

Cham Reaction's aluminum CD boxes are already the shiny cult objects of magpie-like record collectors. Decay Product is a collection of tracks, previously out on vinyl, by the comically named Berlin trio (known to melting in stores the world over). Berlin's restlessness is often attributed to its foundations on sand, and the surface of V&A's music is all chameleonic fluctuations. They perfectly capture the motion of a chaotic substance at the moment it begins reaching equilibrium. Wobbles displace the motif, sending it hawking between 4/4 and swing. The synthesized residues of "No 5 (Delayed)", extruded through the FX rack, emerge like a voice singing in Spooky The Hue; Piano-like "Resistant 1 2" is a sphall; cooling, jets of gas curling off.

On albums such as *Piercing Music* on the Im Balance label, Monolake's team Robert Herke married the low-density cracklings of electronic composers such as Bernard Gutter with pastoral Ambient loon recordings. With Gerhard Berles in Monolake, the relentless trundle along the Autobahn has achieved lift-off — this is Kraftwerk at cruising altitude, a magnetic glide that finds its ideal environment in the polished rapid transit systems, reflective floor-panels and soft-focus announcements of the Hong Kong cityscape. Opening with "Cyber", the self German post-bat breaks angrily through a hug of bowler ironies, single scratches, morose preoccupation. The 18 minute "Laria"/"Mica" oppch leaves its occasional ornaments for behind, spinning itself into a grotesque trance whose entire equilibrium, you feel, could be upset by the tiniest of nudges on the delay dial. "Hans Transit Railway" closes the album with the perfect invocation of Monolake's aesthetic, codified by Wieland Samel's chocolate sea, you hurtle untroubled at 200 mph through the Asian sun.

ROB YOUNG

Restgerauesch

Restgerauesch: Volume 2
PHILIP PLATTEN HP43 0023736P

Various Artists

Moldation And Transformation 3
PHILIP PLATTEN HP43 0023736P

With a couple of notable exceptions, theory and music make very strange bedfellows. By striking a balance between self-consciously theoretical music and music that allows the audience to do all of the intellectualizing, Actim Szepanski's *Mille Plateaux* label is usually one of those exceptions. On these two releases, however, the balance has slipped toward the former, with too many half-understood buzzwords thrown around to camouflage a distinctly static and stagnant soundworld.

Restgerauesch Volume 2 is an album of metric noise apparently based on *Restgeraueschventures*—the principle of inaudible sound amplification. Nice. As an exploration of the normally unobtainable universe of frequencies that only dogs can hear, this is meant to be the audio equivalent of one of those nature shows that illuminate the world 35,000 feet below sea level. The problem is, the sounds that a whole army of analogue delays, feedback, stereo processors and Synthscans conjure up aren't anything near as bizarre as a fish with a lamp protruding from its head. Like that old cliché, this is music you'd probably rather read about than listen to, but I'm not even sure I'd want to do that.

I wouldn't mind reading about *Tenre Thuenen's* "What Is Between Missing" (from *Moldation And Transformation 3*), which uses soundclips from America's Sally Jesse Raphael TV talk show to construct a potentially powerful statement about the construction of gender in a tabloid world, but listening to it leaves me with too much of the intellectual work and not enough of the pleasure. Elsewhere, as on *Ona's* dryly "inspired" (D) Spooky's orientalist, but misanthropic "Nodal Flat," the opposite is true: the music has been theorized out of existence before the fact. Pieces like *Max Eastley* and *Thomas Komer's* elegant live-performance snippet, *Arno Patzer's* serene "Into Spherical Structures," *Crabbe Vageli's* impressionistic "My Bird In The Air" and *Plumaton's* intricate but communicative "Fire" show how the sort of thing should be done by making feedback, inference and disconcerting not only part of an interrogation about the nature of music, but part of an effort to break down the walls of Electronic's cerebral, snappy ghetto as well.

PETER SHAFRO

Ulan Bator

Vegetable
LES DISQUES DU SOUL ET DE LA CLOCHE 0045-0055 CD

This is French group Ulan Bator's third album, and I'm only sorry I've not heard its predecessors. Vegetable shares kinship with the American proto math-rock groups Don

Catellero and Johnboy, though it's not as explosive. Ulan Bator's guitar, bass and drums (and occasional vocal) work like designs superimposed one on another and then shifted around to produce new slowed patterns. "Pleash Organ" exemplifies these musical gear shifts, employing a sort of crablike sideways progression, and "Cephalopode" finds them clanking something wonderful out of just a few chords. Drummer Frank Langrac is an exceptional player, dropping beats or reversing them when you least expect it, without ever delaying the music to forward momentum. Stylistically, this puts him somewhere between Jaki Liebezeit and Donno. No bad place to be.

Ulan Bator music follows an eccentric orbit, while their power is usually kept smothering in reserve. The players investigate the borders of song structure. They built up enormous tension on the closing "Embarrasement Vegetale," that is, ostensibly based around a single bass chord. Apparently, they played a marathon three-hour set with *Fast* early last year. Hard to imagine, given Ulan Bator's inherent sense of control: halting on the brink before complete feedback sets it is what makes the group so special.

PHILIP HARRIS

Various Artists

Altered States Of America
LO RECORDINGS LOT CD

Having grown tired of concealing nefarious collaborations, Jon Tye's *Lo Recordings* sets its sights on defining the state of the American electronic pseudo-avant garde. Given the recent decline of product from the hundreds, if not thousands, of this, cottage-equality label that have sprung up after *Warp* or *Adren* went or *Squarepusher* or *Haggy* or any other worts, it's fitting to see as someone's validation that their tangle bedroom antics are someone else's music, and the alarming similarity between them, the question that must be asked is: how American is any of this stuff? Half grating and paranoiacal, half intricate and highly detailed, *Altered States Of America* does not exactly state its claim on open territory. In its sexuality, anti-corporately and the glue that it takes in cleaning the dancefloor, this is dance music overlaid by Schrödinger's cat—a posture adopted by most of the game movers in this global anti-scene.

There seems to be a mathematical certainty to a lot of the material: a startlingly rigid, that leaves no room for engagement let alone dissent, replicates the groove. There are some nice sounds here—digital tropes from David Knutson, the ungently snaky belch in the middle of *B-Zone Modules* "Send Bubbles," *Kursten's* beat with a bear—but they are devoid of any real shape. Unsurprisingly, the best track is the funkier, the Fourth Wave *disco* amalgam of *Tiepie Sound's* "More Micro Hekt," a lesson to be learned for both regenerator and funk-fishers.

PETER SHAFRO

The Tony Williams

Lifetime
EMERGEY!
VINE 339111 CD

The Tony Williams

Turn It Over
VINE 339111 CD

Last year's *Acacia* album, *Art Of The Testimony*, might not have been the most shocking or groundbreaking outing of Tony Williams's career, but his "starting and seismic" playing on that posthumously released album made you realize how untimely his relatively early death was. But perhaps it provided the impetus for PolyGram to finally release his group's lifetime's first two albums on CD in their complete, rather than anthologized form.

For anyone—like me—who was too young to hear it at first time round, listening to 1969's *Emergency!* almost three decades later makes you wish you were there to feel the shock contemporary listeners must have felt. It's difficult to avoid drawing the conclusion that this, and the 1970 follow-up *Turn It Over*, were subjected to some unfair historical revisionism. *Emergency!* was released in the same year as *A Self-Same Way* and *Drives Home*, yet the notion persists that Miles Davis was jazz rock's maddie, if not its daddy. Of course, Davis moved into some extraordinary (and equally reviled) musical territories, but his initial electric work was undoubtedly influenced by what his former sideman was getting up to in his lifetime.

Furthermore, electric Davis was far less of a break with the continuum of his career than was Williams's lifetime, in which the chummer emerged among other things, the polished hard rock of groups like *The MC5*. The rock shift was a conscious move on Williams's behalf, as proven by the group he put together. The respective approaches of England's young Johnny McLaughlin (recruited by Williams after hearing a tape) and organist Larry Young were as far from the chamber jazz of Williams's years with the drummer as he could get.

The double album *live Emergency!* (here released on one CD) was recorded in the Spring of 1969 in New York just two days. Talk about two days that changed the world (OK, at least the course of jazz.) If some elements sound dated (most notably, Williams's declamatory beat poetry and singing), as a whole it remains far more relevant now than most of the music made in its wake. Young's organ sound is still incomparable in its elemental power, and McLaughlin's playing is full of youthful fire—an aspect he sadly extinguished as his style "matured." Williams, of course, is a whirlwind, his ferocious rhythms more incandescent, and all the more startling, in this context.

The critics hated it. In response, Williams's posthumous band even more enraptured. Turning down an offer for lifetime to become

Miles's new group he ceased further outrage by bringing in Jack Bruce, fresh from Cream, for the *Turn It Over* sessions. No doubt the album confirmed jazz snobs' worst fears, with songs reduced to three or four notes, blues. But Young and McLaughlin are even more incendiary than before, and Bruce's bass gives the group—as if an extra power surge were really needed—even more energy. An astonishing album.

SHON HOPKINS

Windsor For The Derby

Minne Grefenfeldt
BRACE SINDICATE TRIS CDLP

Paul Newman

Frames Per Second
BRACE SINDICATE TRIS CDLP

Windsor For The Derby successfully fuse Ambient with rock in much the same way as Labradford, but with the careless application of analogue synths and with a real understanding of space, and of how to let their music float freely in a Minne Grefenfeldt feels much more like an entire piece than a collection of indie tracks. Themes are reintroduced throughout, in particular the simple, repetitive guitar patterns which to give the music its understated momentum. The percussion tends to follow the guitar's lead, and bass frequencies are muted, giving the music a dreamlike quality—the rhythms never feel too reassuringly solid, allowing for the establishment of an ambiguous mood without forsaking structure. The closing "Slomming" features stark guitar notes played out in echoing space against a constant drone and the metallic brist of percussion, and here WFTD turn the possibility of inaudibility into a tool, where music fades in and out of a lunar landscape and guitar drums are reinvited to hypnotic, cyclic patterns.

Paul Newman (named after their bass player) share a point of origin with WFTD—Austin, Texas—and a similar fascination with repetition. But their sound is far more bass-heavy and relies on some deep grooves and jagged guitar chords and drum fills. The opening "Bernets Of Style" begins with a similar sense of disorientation to parts of *Minne Grefenfeldt*, but the echoing drones are soon supplanted by jagged bursts of guitar and percussion before an even two-note bassline resurfaces and allows the music to stretch out. However, fluidly it is maintained but bolstered by choppy guitar chords and shifts in tempo. "Work To Do" neatly showcases this post-rock rock, where fuzzy guitars clank with the evenness of the bass rhythm. Occasionally the low end emphasizes a warning, but Paul Newman manages to avoid predictability by virtue of intricate arrangements, as when the oppressively low bass is suddenly shipped away in "And White" and a simple guitar melody carries the track, as if anticipating the listener's growing sense of ennui.

TON HEDGE

in brief critical beats

Reviewed by Peter Shapiro

Aix Seky Boy

Upon hearing this and finding out that Air is the focus of the month is the dance press, my wife said, "I swear all you have to do is put some breathy French bird in a song and music videos will all over their computer screens." Not much to add to that really, other than to say that the Cassius remix has some nice Electro sounds wrapped around said breathy French bird.

Amptek Declassified EP

Surely the culmination of electronic music's fascination with mistletoe, "UFO Crash" is a John Philip Sousa death march scored for oscillators, lead and survival gear. "Chupacabra" follows suit with Doppel-er effect bomb waves and field recordings from the local fire/rain gauge. Don't be fooled by the soothing "Placode Dub" of "Area 51" — it's a ruse, just like the National Rifle Association's espousal of family values. Unless you're going out skew shooting with an U.S. approach with extreme caution.

Bad Street Boy

In which Panacea abandons his trash-can riddle rousing in favour of some seriously filthy (in all senses of the word) broodhouse archaeology. Rites unearthed include "The Dominant Steps Tonight," a very unparaphrased version of Madonna's "Justify Your Love," Ademi's "Killer," Sauter's Force's "Looking For The Perfect Beat" and Xavier's "Work That Sucker To Death." One question, though: just how does seven minutes of the sound of cocklicking fit into his idea of "revolutionary noise?"

Chocolate Weasel

For Body Rockers mix tape 2005 (12") Junglist T Power in bodypopping mode. I must admit that I used to find T Power's dystopian Jungle utterly loathsome, but this scrapbook of breakdancing's glory days is a splendid indie move based on a clever deconstruction of Bob James' "Miami Goo" break. On the flip, "Rewind From Scratch" sounds like Human League circa Dore with Larry Heard and Monte Pultr duetting on keyboards. Maybe the BOs weren't so bad after all.

A Guy Called Gerald

System/The Fallen Prince of Haze/Vox just box promo 12" Although this 12" of hedonistic mechanical rhytmes is more like Motek's "Hidden

Camera" than the current barrage of clinical, metallic two-steps, I can't help but feel that Gerald is trying to keep up with trends rather than set them as he did with 28 Gun Boat Boy and Black Secret Technology. It's not bad, but it's clearly the sound of someone treading water. Will someone please remind Jungle producers that there are other sounds out there besides foghorns and melodramatic synth motifs that some soundtrack hack like Danny Elfman would be too embarrassed to use.

Industry Standard

Volume 1 (What You Want) SATURITE SATURITE 12" Remover of a Speed Garage "four-flir" "What You Want" is Garage that is pretty much, well, industry standard, with those skipping hi-hats a little more jaunty than they are. More interesting is Jeremy Sylvestre's "Nice 'N' Ripe Plur" which manages to live up to Speed Garage's hype as a synergy of mood, bad boy Junglists (limestriching, chopped breaks, backwards dice vocals, gratuitous Jamaican canned noises) with Garage's cyber-gospel, drum-machine hosannas. More fun than a barrel of Technopans.

Paddington Breaks

Smart But Crazy EP no. 100000 12" More stale drum clank/scratching from Brighton's army of unnamed smart-alecs. Granted, Paddington Breaks is more communicative than his cohorts, but there's something about this spunk jazz thing that makes me feel like one of those omelet old cutthroats at modern art museums that proclaims to everyone within earshot, "What's the big deal? I could do that." I wonder if the luring notes and plankier beats are really that bad, or if I am just envious that I didn't have the wherewithal to enrich some soloist into releasing my own barely post-accident inside jokes on the world? Someone give these guys a job.

Paradox Caba/Scammers

no. 100000 12" "Scanners" is "scary" drum 'n' bass that works because the tension is all within the hurried, but constrained drum break that never breaks loose until the end, rather than the 'leaky' songs and 'sloppy' effects "Cuba," on the other hand, has a flute, and you know what that means.

PRIMEdeep

live deacon/Blue apatche members 100000 12" Not sure about the titles, but the music

from this label deep in the heart of the American Midwest's beer belt is ringing at the very least. This EP is arcane drum 'n' bass as it should be: slightly unsettling atmospheres and whispered off-kilter beats that add to the tension — a bit like Controlled Bleeding with a sense of rhythm.

Ed Ruah & Optikal

Fanfiction/Naked Lunch v. 00000000 12" The two hottest producers in drum 'n' bass show that they actually know more than neat processing tricks in the studio. The unrelenting pace of the drums and well-timed guitar sample on "Funkbox" shows that they understand building tension — a quality in bass these days. While it's not exactly a revelation, what I see dangling on the end of the fork of "Naked Lunch" is well-formed, jagged drum 'n' bass in which the appealingly thin drum sound that is so vaguely actually makes sense.

DJ Shadow Camel Bobsled

Race (Q-Bert Mega Mix) no. 100000 12" 12"

DJ Kruah Holomo: The Self

Megazoo no. 100000 12" Eschewing strange juxtapositions and concentrating more on the megamixing, these releases owe more to Afrika Bambaataa's "Death Mix" than "Adventures Of Grandmaster Flash On The Wheels Of Steel." If you still haven't heard the grossly talented Q-Bert on the out, then this might be your best bet as all of his tricks are on display on this readily available 24 minute shakedown of DJ Shadow's most well-known tracks. There are no gymnastic flights of fancy on Kruah's mix, but his tightfisted manipulations do add to the general air of angst and congestion that surrounds his music.

SkyLab The ? EP

no. 100000 12" Why is it that people like Phil Dussane and Portthead's Geoff Barrow suddenly think that they're about Phil Spector's? This scathingly collage of jazz textures, bad scatting, stage, voices taken from American radio whispering nonsense in the background, and soundbites from various effects pedals is probably meant to be some grand and clever statement about postmodern fragmentation, but it's really just an unpleasant mess.

Swollen Members Swollen

Members EP no. 100000 12" Although these days anything that's not about the Benjamins seems revolutionary, the post-Dr Octagon deluge of wondrous sick-pensations and tentative grasps on reality has indeed generated the most innovative Hip-hop since the golden age of 1987-90. While the sub-genre PMO — tangential

ruminations of half-understood soft buzzwords — is an inevitable cult de sac, Swollen Members' magnificently moody "Paradise Lost" suggests why people are going on over this stuff at the moment. Live Company Flow Swollen Members are not afraid to dive headlong into the murky waters of amphetamine opened up by the Bomb Squad. "Paradise Lost" is a dense pot of dark strings and nail-across-blackboard scratching courtesy of Invidia/Scratch P.M. Member Mike Shane about the name, though.

Test Dept The Enigma Of

Doctor Dee/Vista Cava no. 100000 12" A dance remix of Test Dept's Industrial squall is not the most auspicious concept in the world — killing somewhere between the re-election of Thatcher, and Goldie, working with Noel Gallagher. Then again, since just about every Junglist has started berating on track cars to make believe these are house, club and moderately Junglist reworkings might actually find dancing partners. On the release, however, and compared to Panacea or Depeche, Test Dept sound as much a part of the establishment as Sir Cliff.

Theorem Maestra One/Clothe

PLUS 10 1000 12" Various Artists Development 1.0 development 00000 12" Various Artists Development 2.0 development 00000 12" Even when it's hard and bouncy, the music on these recent releases from Reche Hawkins Plus B family of labels concentrates on Gallagher's capacity to create a sense of mesmerizing melancholy. When listening to these records I can't get the images out of my head of driving on Canada's obscenely desolate Highway 401 — which runs from Plus B's home across the river from Detroit in Windsor to Toronto — in midwinter with only snow squalls for company. Despite the warmth of the analogue synths on display, this is lonesome, frigid music.

U-Shen/Delarsola Let's Talk

Swimming Pools/Kao no. 100000 12" U-Shen is Toronto's John Herndon in drum 'n' bass mode. Although I was prepared to loathe this, I've got to admit that it is very good. While it doesn't hit with almighty bass, and the beats are word rather than funk, it does manage to groove at the same time as it overflows with FX — a bit like a Junglist version of Mike Dred's African Anthem. Atlanta based Delarsola turn in some fine avant dub on "Tonight At Chang Suan's", a blueprint which becomes more dubby and more avant on Casey Koe's excellent Designer mix of "Es Zeit" □

in brief electronica

Reviewed by Peter Shapiro

Bannist Digital Tension

CDMT 12 CD

Musically to accompany the rain washing all the scum away in the sequel to *Too Deep*. Picked somewhere between *Autism* and *UFO*, the grey Bernard Hermanns colour the pinched, minimal beats with enough game to lift this bizarre dispatch from the headquarters of Vienna producers Sabotage out of the mire of toilet humour beats that has dominated the last 12 months of Electronica.

Bullitons Nut Roast

RECORDER RECORDS 9045

A welcome return to form from the Porky style. The first track suggests that they've been listening to Tortoise up in Hull, but the *Chicagoans* and textures have been replaced by a more liquid groove and a whisper of ethnodance. The rest of the album features that trademark Pork sound, made up of whorls but from OMD, New Age records, Real World outtakes, Joe Sample and Sade, that somehow manages to transcend its less-than-salubrious source material.

Cee-Mix Low Flying Fragments

RECORDING RECORDS 9071

Not quite as witty this seemingly run-of-the-mill downtempo album is so offensive and, in places, rather good. Maybe it's that Cee-Mix don't make a point of running their beats through sludge, or maybe it's because their Moog and Fender Rhodes fills are understated and blend perfectly with the almost-silent of their secondhand synthesizers. Then again, maybe it's that L-L-X and M-L-D swipe from drum 'n' bass for its stylistic boredom. Most likely, though, it's that I'm a sucker for anyone who samples Arthur Russell's "Go Bang".

Dark Magnus Night Watchmen

ADAMANT 10193 CD

Yet another guide to Cabaret Voltaire reissues. Richard H Kirk, and yet more distance from the snarling drone of old *White* it might not approach the heights of "Nag Nag Nag" or *Red Mecca*, the found-sound detritus from House and keyboard sequences of *Night Watchmen* is a fine rapprochement between groove and Ennod, exposed detachment. The Miles Davis reference in Kirk's latest also makes sense even as it flatters to deceive, but the nod to Joe Walsh's James Gang on "Flunk-48" hints of a joke that I wish I understood.

DM Rush Robo Tripp'n EP

HM 25 12"

A record of extremely fearsome filtering. The beats of "Giant Goggles" sound as though they were made out of a recording of a wind tunnel, while "Keds 'N' Things" shows that Rush isn't too put out to slip in some gamelan sounds in the middle of a jacking groove. It's the same approach to sound and rhythms as the Chan Reaction stable, except that the movements are more perceptible and Rush wants you to get whiplash when you listen.

Drum Island Drum Island

AMPT 9145 CD

With present company excepted, the sticker phenomenon seems to have lost a bit of momentum over the past year. Perhaps one reason is that music like this is the inevitable outcome of a couple of years spent worshipping at the altar of the Church of the Subgenius, the beats are no longer jay, just half-wired. At its best this sounds like a bad Pizzolo *Five Arms* with only the Casio preset Latin rhythm left over, at its worst, it is the most prosaic music I have heard since the last Chris Rea concert I attended.

Dumb Type S/N

STOR LACER 905456 CD

Why is it that conceptual artists seem perpetually stuck in the 80s when it comes to choosing accompanying music? Not that the portentous gloss of environment-sponsored Minimalism is a bad thing when it is crafted as subtly as it is here by producer Ryoji Ikeda and composers Toru Yamanaka and Tappi Formis, but I kept expecting Laurie Anderson to arise from the mix to tell me about her latest epiphany while riding a yak in Tibet to a background of hyperspeed, time-lapse photography of the Grand Canyon and Grand Central Station.

Artistic clichés aside, this collection of pieces designed to accompany various performance pieces by Japanese multimedia collective Dumb Type, is full of evocative and affective Electronica. Nothing terribly new or innovative, mind, just tried and true Ambient devices that make you look out of a window wistfully and ponder the dialectical of nature, the disappearance of dialectical struggle and the difference between capital and noise.

S/N is a perfect evocation of the cool, white detachment of the gallery space, perhaps this is a refinement of the pose of self-reflexivity: art-house music about being in an art-house.

Elevators Laid Back

WOLFELOUSE 0008 20 CD

James Hardway Welcome To The Neon Lounge RECORDINGS OF SUBSTANCE 90113 CD

For Chunks put those Blue Note albums away, already. The Elevators are a bunch of Finns with too many Gales-Peterson complications and too much time on their hands. I like Shirley Scott and Boogaloo Joe Jones as much as the next guy, but this savish adherence to minor-scaled groove is as crass and emulating as Ques, but with less attitude.

More sweetstick vibes from drum 'n' bassist James Hardway, but with a bit more style. It is unchallenging agreeability. Welcome To The Neon Lounge is the Jungist equivalent of US3. Not necessarily a bad thing, but not a great one either.

Fetique Paying Mr So-And-So

SMOKE SMOKE CD

I must confess that I have played kerdell (baseball meets football) with Taylor Despreux (one half of Futaba along with Savvas Ylatis), so that may influence my opinion of this fine, moody, not-quite-chronic, not-quite-Basic Channel record. However, like Despreux's records for the Rancho Relaxo family, *Paying Mr So-And-So* is nearly perfect headphone music in which neither the disk moves, nor the fake string fills are gratuitous. A rare quality, no matter whose name appears in the fine print.

Komet Flex Komet Flex

RECORDING RECORDS 9071

The despatch bad package suggests one of those aimless, desultory Techno releases that clog the shelves of chain stores where the buyer has no clue as to what she is doing. The music, however, is a different thing entirely. Similar in many ways to the Futaba album mentioned above, this latest release from one of the more interesting Electronica labels around is delicately detailed, abstract analogue portland that is neither obvious nor redundant.

Nonplace Urban Field Golden

Star/Raum Far Notubes records: 901117 CD

Another welcome UK appearance for two of the finest exiles of ghost town Electronica you're likely to hear. Golden Star features tracks from *Raum Far Notzen* remixed by Solid Doctor, Scanner, Porter Ricks, Mushygun, Pluramoon and Bernd Friedmann (Nonplace Urban Field) herself, and is marginally the more interesting half of this double CD reissue by virtue of its varied versions of Friedmann's signature short-circuiting Electro-scaggle. *Raum Far Notzen*, however, does include the original version of "Whims", which is surely the finest non-Basic Channel Basic Channel track ever.

Octagon Man Vidd Electron

INDUSTRIES FRONT 12"

Alexander's Dark Band Beat

VOYBOX RECORDS 9002 20 CD

As his brilliant *Beat Classic* compilation showed, J Saul Kane is one of the few producers of brittle, quirky Electronica to repay the genre's extensive debt to Latin drum-era HipHop. "Vidd" follows suit with tough, rigid Electro that replaces the *Space Invaders* shuffle with 90s style, articulate mournfulness. Kane's new alias, Alexander's Dark Band, debuts with the perfectly titled *Beat Vortex* album. Hip-hop gets sucked into a black hole of abrasive FX and emanating filters, which says it of its funky life force and the gaunt, Mundt-like canon a left for dead.

The Spaceworm Army Of God

EXPERIMENTALISMS IN INTELLIGENT

GABRIEL: WML COMMUNICATIONS 9111 CD

Nothing could be more nonsensical than the concept of intelligent gabber, but that is precisely what this is. With the exception of the perfectly bludgeoning "Army Of God-52007", this has all the belting bluster of Gabba, but with the schmier-lustre bass pong and goosestepping lock drums replaced by any processed drum sounds and decompressed dynamics. Never thought that I'd be able to say this about rousies like the folks at Vinyl Comm, but the fact is they're just not hard enough.

Various Artists The End Of The

Beginning (New House) CD

I know House is generally a dry world in these parts, but this is one of the finest collections of contemporary electronic music I've heard in a long time. Featured artists include Herbert (aka Dr Rodd), Freiks and Point Blank, all of whom are as concerned with the intricacies of construction as Ryoji Ikeda or Phostona except that the former rigour here gets translated into eloquent grooves. There's plenty of angular, stripped down disco that's easy on both the ears and the hips, but the best thing here is Point Blank's "A Game Of Two Haines" which isn't too dissimilar from Porter Ricks with a pair of maracas.

Wishmountain/Radio Boy

Wishmountain LA Dead, Long Live

Radio Boy WISHMOUNTAIN 3012 CD

Tim Herbert says goodbye to his kitchen sink approach to music making. Amen, because they made much better music out of bottles, cheese graters and washboards in Mississippi, Cuba and Louisiana half a century ago and didn't land it over us in a world where everything has been context-invented, it's good to see him abandon Wishmountain's gimmicky approach for the more sensible experimentation of his Radio Boy guise — less punched clogs and little boy noses, more bells, gongs, machine mirrors and, believe it or not, funk. ☐

in brief outer limits

Reviewed by Matt fytche

The Apary: The Foundry

FOUNDRY CD
eM The first release from the new Californian label, The Foundry, showcasing the collective forces of, um, M Bentley, who monkeys as both eM and The Apary as well as performing most of the tracks on a compilation called *Electronics* (an unusual exploration of Ambient Casualties) — Greg Schubert and New Age melodies as played on a wheezing, sorrow-toned cinema organ? (Bentley is the most promising, drawing on Panosic and Ryoji Ikeda to explore the nature of electromagnetic sound. Tracks have descriptions such as "This world is haunted, as am I. Feedback signal, static charges" — and that's pretty much what you get: live processing of radio, TV and computer signals, clean inaudible hums and scribbles of noise and heartbeat pulses, but with occasional added woodwind synths and Ambient surroundings for that haunted feel. This is really between two worlds — a Manichean struggle between the New Age and the experimental, with electromagnetism taking the place of white noise. Descent is more explicitly Norse and mystical. The accompaniment to an installation, it explores repeating thematic materials, a method bass series, lively rising sparse synthesizer notes with added special effects. For me, all this grandeur in the studios drowns a dying cat over the spoils of possibility in the music.

Auber/Knauf Split: AUBER RECORDINGS

AUBER CD
CCCC Rocker Shizuka **CREATIVEMIX** (SPC 0000001) CD
 Split is a most dubious ploy to global non-communication. Auber's Akilum Nakagawa performed live at Tokyo's City Museum of Art in Tokyo, November 1996, with telephones operated by Yun Shinobu providing all the source material. The 20 minute "Scramble Police" takes a while to build up from the sub-bass, eventually emerging as lumpy multi-toned grunts and rumbles which mature into washed-out beats, dapping and rising whistles, clear pinging drones and low bass rumble. "Violence Call" has a more aggressive, chattering escalation. To me it says: microphone hunger. Knauf provides the matching half of the CD. Aivan Bayl, based in Toronto, uses scrap metal and Boss distortion and oscillator pedals to produce a more fibrous-like sound leaning towards hissing fibrous, crackle, fibrous struggle and tingles. Only 500 copies of this one.
 CCCC's standard: bass + bass + bass, pny-

eyed feedback drones and distortion drenches hint at Japanese noise territory. Three tracks apart spruikled titles, without practicing any psychic solace into the barrage of noise-nature. The faint moans weaving over the blast could be therapeutic or just a will-o-the-wisp thrown up by the feedback — or someone with nowhere better to go plunging into a mental chasm. The 30 minute "Rocker Shizuka" adds mangled metallic drones like saved symbols, psychedelic guitar flutters, and strange cross-like lines. A nice attempt to stretch the listening spirit as far as possible into the gleaming, resting matter of sound.

Thomas Dimuzio: Loudness

LOUDNESS CD
RENNICK Strube **CD** (SPC 0000001) CD
 Loudness remasters original cassette releases from 1987 and 88 (*Deformation Of Perspective* and *Just*) exploring noise steadies into just as sublime tumult (although "Of Vast And Barren, Rattling Wastelands" has an undeniable magnitude) but through a more abstract analysis of process and technique. "Self-Proclaimed Contention (Without Vanities)", using bass, microphone, processors and mixer, is a series of dynamic builds-up segued over each other in endless take-off that convey the velvet thunder of intergalactic spacecraft rather than industrial spinning metal. Dimuzio's equipment includes samplers, analogue synths, E-box and tape recorder — the mixture of technical systems generating an intelligent vocabulary of power, impulse, velocity and rhythm. A nice foray into the experimental complexities of modernity.
 Strube's steels take what the record contains no instruments or sampler. Perhaps these are the noises Rennick makes over the breakfast table — the sound of a genetically dissolute organism hooked into a life support system. Frosty diodes, abrasives and activate flutters, possibly ramp-modulated. With titles such as "Song Of The Rhombopod", is a spaciety and cosmological window onto some entity that is part insect, part poisonous radiator system.

Dunk & Deoxy Spiritual

JAGUAR/MR JAGGED CD
 Pooling acoustic guitar, banjos, mandolins, accordions and much else, this seven piece ensemble from Richmond, Vancouver, give out a bleached, balladic warmth from the last place between folk and Garage. The skeletal lyricism of singer PJ Alverson perfectly matches these plucked and companionable down-roads. Imagine

Johnny Depp playing an asteroid Christy Moore in the post-cosby sacker plains of New World no-towns.

Face A: Picture Of End

CASUALTIES TCN017 CD

Fibre Sub: Aquatic Memories

CASUALTIES TCN018 CD

Hungry Ghost: The Man Ray

SEESAWER LABS CASUALTIES TCN019 CD

Lifesaver Laboratories: Terms & Conditions

CASUALTIES TCN020 CD

Four from Hollywood-based label Tone Casualties. The titles may conjure up industrial ear-bleeders, but Tone Casualties, who put out some of Paul Schutz's work, seem to favour a Dark Ambient/Fourth World vein in which horror negativity has been supplanted by a loosing mood music. Paris and Justin Bennett of Face combine synthesized forces in hazy and vaguely sombre electronic depictions of dark rhythmic beats and uncertain atmospheres.

On Sue Aquatic's *Memories* a song unleashes the full Jungian collective unconscious, portentous drum booms, nature programme synths, gushing water, banshee chanting and ecstatic twanging instruments. What sounds like New Age meltdown soon steadies into a Fourth Worldist Koson recalling *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*. Exotic hybridized atmospheres over a warm and funky global jambores.

Hungry Ghost gestate organic lullabies that seep through repetitive tones and undulating string drones. Titles such as "K-Plant" and "Nagual" suggest an alienation between Yaku shamans and NASA's scientific tracking gamma-rays in America's outlands. What Man Ray is doing in this company is anyone's guess.

Loose is the word again for *Lifesaver Laboratories'* fluid rumblings, growlings, muffled pulses and brooding drones. The unfolding of a gloomy terrain where light meets TV threshold. A couple of the tracks clock up a far, mood-dappled Ambient Techno, but a lot of this stuff hasn't compacted into any great advance.

In The Nursery: Asphalt

COMPOSITION CSD011 CD

Ensemble early BDs in catalysts in The Nursery drive in their soundtrack explorations (*Between Hell And Vampire*). The Cabinet Of Dr. Caligari with this accompaniment to Joe May's 1929 German expressionist tale of urban crime and seduction. Unlike expressionist music traditions and more recent improv soundtracks to the brutes, manometers and sirens of the Weimar series, In The Nursery go for a more glazed and hypnotized sound. Howling chords and warm suspended string drones form kinesthetic while warm grooves pulse them along. The atmosphere is continuous, classical and platine — a kind of deepswelling tectonics. If David Sylvian

had been an American Minimalist composer, he might have sounded like this.

Ku: Tsuzume KURIKI CD

Difficult to place, but lying somewhere on the spread between New Edge and New Age. Dissonant held drones and whispering instruments evoke Fourth World ambiances some rhythmic loops and percussive patterns, jaggedness, classical guitar, throat-singing, found objects and "psycho-carnatio". Jean-Philippe Bordon, Franco Carosso and Lorenzo Pardon call this a journey towards the inner nature of improvisation and sound. The dolphins and killer whales pouring and blowing ripples through the tracks probably have a different agenda. Deformalising at times, the embryonic space at the heart of the cosmos would be more confining if they dropped the confused contours and occasional temptations of sick guitar.

Muslingauge: Jail

MUSLINGAUGE RECORDINGS SD03 CD

Muslingauge has been whirling out CDs like a dervish on acid, but as a relative newcomer, I found myself enjoying these Arabian trance sounds mingled with punchy bebop skanks, fuzzy beats and electronic twinks. A streetwise folk-rance collage (some of the 26 tracks are only snippets) that echoes Fourth World luxury and mysticism for a skitterer apt-pro window on the Middle East, with titles such as "Kabul Is Free Under A Veil" and "Barbaric Bhutari's Hands Are Clean". The 18 grooves reminded me of Tom Waits's streetwise/sk melange applied to Fortie Crescent samples.

Max Nagl: Super 8

8 BEST NOISES 002 CD

People Like Us: People

LABE YOU SEMINAR ST119 CD

Max Nagl, a bona fide Austrian who played cymbals in a marching band, has come through rock, jazz, improv and film to produce this medley of plastic guitar, found sounds, TV samples and kitschy neotopia tunes. Fast lights erupt David Sze-style as a backing to Jean De Florette melodic solos. Glockenspiel and accordion mingle with kitchen clutter, Spaghetti Western shoot-outs with manic plastic guitar jabs. All recorded onto a four-track, there's a deft, spontaneous hand-held camera feel — more roaming and impromptu than manic pastiche.

Kicking off with yo-yo-bey Austro-Italo and cowbells, Vicki Bennett's *Hide People* (Like You) is a phantasmagoric goon show of Easy Listening, commercial pulp culture quotes, Alpine crowd-pleasers, adverts and radio call-ins. A Baadermeister crash course in the postmodern pessimism palace, the picture postcard reality testers between cabaret and nihilism, with the saguaro samples deranged and distorted into slips and glitches, seavallied hiccup of speech and robotic repetitions. □

in brief out rock

Reviewed by David Keenan

Che-SHIZU Love 1996 PSYCHOBOON
Onna-Kodomo Syntaxis Channel
MUSIC CD 02

The SHIZU first turned up on the landmark Free Frith compilation *Welcome To Dreamland*, which, incidentally, was also many people's first introduction to Key Hano. Since then they've released a slew of three-disc sets on PSF. For the uninitiated, however, Love 1996 is as good an entry point as any. Combining ethereal psychedelia with the howlings of old British folk standards ("The Young Girl Cut Down In Her Prime," "Sassy Sailor"), they may seem like a pretty bizarre proposition and, truthfully, they are.

Onna-Kodomo were one of the highlights on PSF's Tokyo *Flambook 4* compilation, so a whole disc's worth of their slow-burning waka/bachan excursions has been eagerly awaited. Thankfully it doesn't disappoint. Yoko Hasegawa's beautifully strangled chanting falls in the charged spaces of tone-bass in a manner not a million miles from some of Key Hano's more underrated "Gregorian" pieces, while Shinnosuke's wailing paints the back wall with some dark dreams.

The Flying Lutenabachers
Gods Of Chanson SON GRAFTS EXPLORE
GRAMOPHON CD

William Carlos Williams
White Women SWEET STINGS SHIMIZU CD
The Flying Lutenabachers are probably best known for the late great free-form player Hal Russell's brief tenure with them, beautifully immortalized on the *Live At WNUC CD*. Later they blasted into a quiet, then briefly called a day, before settling on the classic guitar/bass/drums triple-format. Drummer and founder member Weiss Walter still feels like a free man but these days the emphasis is less on jazz and more on talking organic rose-puff and prickly-Salvadori dynamics. In terms of dense, well-sound-alone this is much more satisfying than a lot of this free-form Japanese stuff during the 1970s.

William Carlos Williams had from Atlanta and drew inspiration from John Zorn, Eric Dolphy and Death Metal. Aspirations aside, *White Women* never really cooks, despite the presence of Eugene Chadbourne on particularly mysterious form during "And You're Stuck In Traffic While Your Piano's Home Having Cocktails With The Termites." You're probably worked this out for yourselves, but in the interest of protecting poetry-lovers' sensibilities, they have nothing to do with William Carlos Williams.

Jane Of 44 Four Great Points
QUARTERSTONE 0554 CD

Lothius Lothius FRESHBART POST CD
Self-chasing that Louisville sound, Jane Of 44 sound like a Sinti tribute group, which is no bad thing if you can't get over the fact that you'll never hear a new Sinti LP again. Even so, you'll miss their heart of darkness and shadowy, oblique lyrics. These boys have their shirts firmly tucked in and are far too whimsical and polite to really do the legacy group. Four Great Points isn't much of a progression from the last thing you heard by them, unless you count Sean Meadows's boast that he played "a searce" on this one. Sorry, I can't hear it.

Lothius are similarly schoolish, featuring the ubiquitous Binky K. Brown (ex-Tortoise) and the now compulsory oddball packaging (this one boasts some sandpaper on the front). "Raser" launches proceedings on an optimistic rock, sounding like Derek Bailey warming up, or Jim O'Rourke impersonating him, but thereafter it's down all the way into some kind of studied avant-Garde sound that we—well, at least some of us—have grown so utterly tired of.

King Crimson The Night
Wardle 1986 1973 DISCOPRE
DISCOWEST CD

Robert Fripp The Jesta EP DISCOPRE
DISCOWEST CD

A much clamoured for release of the *Cross/Fripp/Watson/Burford* King Crimson line-up live at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw. Some of this stuff later made it onto *Stones And Bibles Black* in edited/overdubbed form, and it's a blast to hear it in all its ragged glory—even if Watson's blurring bass threatens to swamp everyone else at the slightest opportunity. Great sound and excellent inimitable by the participants are just the icing on the cake. As Jesta is taken from Fripp's imminent *Genes Of Paradise LP*, and it's a mildly diverting piece of electronic shimmers similar to, but never scaling the heights of, the *Prop/Eto* collaborations.

Lenola The Last 10 Feet Of The
Suzanne Miles WESPRESSON CD

Ultra Modern *Wespesson* WESPRESSON CD
Lenola show off their peerless gift of post-*Lenola* funk disanto-pop with an effortlessly executed set of ripped guitar and soaring harmonies, before turning back to chaos and doing it again. And again. No matter: there was a worthwhile track that deserves repeating.

No one, on the other hand, really needs the new *Ultra CD*. Everything about it stinks of third

generation, clueless industrial cliché. They let their qualifications, a 7" single in an edition of 15, songs with titles like "Clustercut" and "New Centurion," some early 80s death synth noises and a few "soundchecks" early.

Magnon More Weather KIMMY
KIMMY 0202 CD

Kiss My Jazz In The Lost Souls
Conventions HEAVEN HOTEL HENRONS CD

Hailing from Washington state, Magnon specialise in heavy tribal dissonance and blast furnace feedback, including nicely delayed guitars à la Gui De So. Unlike too much recent Kuroki product, which hardly has the energy to get out of the festival tank, this is a mercifully heavy double CD set compiling various home recordings from 1994-96. While not exactly essential, it's a good place to spend an hour or so.

Kiss My Jazz's in The Lost Souls Convention is a confused and incoherent slab of lounge moves, forlorn, vaguely Country melancholy, and razor sharp funk with allusions to Devo and Goro. Ultimately, though, it just leaves you itching.

Ruins Redundant Fossil SON GRAFTS CD
Magma *Kompala* SONEN SONEN CD

For anyone not already in the know, Magma play some of the most over-the-top, pompous, comedic Prog rock ever to be executed with a straight face. Despite this, their fans are numerous and a good many of them are oblivious about their appropriation of Christian Vander and friends. One such fan is Tatsuya Yoshida, whose own group, Japanese bass and drum legends Rums, include a tribute to Magma (as part of their "Prog Rock Medley") on *Redundant Fossil*, a meep-up collection of hard and unreleased tracks. At least Yoshida has a sense of humour about the sheer bombastic lunacy of it all, exagerrating startup rhythms and howling in kekeke throughout. Unfortunately, there's something about them that only reinforces the stereotypical Western perception of Japanese music as "weird" or "mad," which makes me uncomfortable.

Rums fans eager to check out the Magma back catalogue will find *Kompala* a good point of entry, with plenty of extracts from the more essential first few albums.

Salamander Red Ampersand
Camisa DISCOWEST DISCOWEST CD

Laddio Bolocco Strange
Warmings Of . . . HUNGARIAN
NO NUMBER CD

Before coming to breathe collectively in 1996, Salamander, from Minneapolis, spewed dead and chunky psychedelic space rock of the patented "smoke 'em at home" school. They even managed to pull a few convincing impressions of Nagu-mu-like tunnel songs (especially on the epic "Carved Into Water"). And Ampersand is the first part of a retrospective series of limited runs.

based round the group, who split up over the old question "Are we too Ambro?" Said, really, because this is an impressive, disenchanted stab at Ash Ra Tempel's patented cosmic floats—but the anti-Ambro faction neither had nor had.

Laddio Bolocco (You're making this up now, aren't you, David?)—Ed also like to jens, but I think it's safe to assume the Bolocco were being out debating the finer points of Ambient. There's a brutal, Brooklyn-lyriced locomotive motion characterized by its squalling guitarium interludes. They were a bit of a debt to Sonic Youth, but then who doesn't? As an added bonus the CD sports a sleeve resilient enough to snare unsuspecting Meadow fans.

Sonic Youth *Slaapmakers* Meet
Slaapmakers SONIC YOUTH DISCOWEST DISCOWEST CD

Lee Ranaldo & William
Hooker (with Jim O'Rourke &
Gianni Gebbia) *Clouds* WICR WICR CD

Instant number two in Sonic Youth's plan to alternate every third *Material* who ever skinned up a copy of *Daydream Nation*, *Slaapmakers* is another set of loose improvisations which prove that they can still cut it alongside all the hardcore improv boy groups formed in their wake. Lots of heavy phasing and broken pick-up clanking, while Steve Shelley keeps them from falling into a big hole. Great Kim Gordon cut-out vocal on "Honeycomb". Not for them, etc.

The Hooker/Ranaldo set catches the duo live at the Victoria Hotel in Canada, May 1997, showcasing some proto-industrial guitarium bursts with occasional electronics from O'Rourke and saxophone from Gebbia. "25 Views Of Florence" includes some evocative nodding by both Ranaldo and Hooker, and when Gebbia and O'Rourke step in on "No Apple Fall", the sheer scale and intensity of attack is truly mind-blowing.

Tiere Der Nacht Hot Stuff CAPTIVE
TRIP CD 073 CD

Tiere Der Nacht *Wolpertinger*
CAPTIVE TRIP CD 074 CD

Tiere Der Nacht was formed by everyone's favourite naked Kuroki percussionist Naeume during a brief spell of post-Guru Guru clarity. These two discs (from 91 and 94 respectively) were originally released by Redice to virtually no interest. Don't know if the time is any better for them now, but they're certainly worth checking out. Naeume is as unringed as ever, belching and muttering to himself throughout, huffing gamelan, diamed ruck, tambore and steel drum into a series of vague guitarium stand-offs. Sparring partner Luigi Anetho puts off some nice staggered (beethof) shapes on the guitar, which lowers them sounding like Royal Trux "on jazz." And if that prospect appeals to you, you'll need these. If pushed, go for *Wolpertinger* first. □

the compiler

New compilations reviewed by Rob Young

Someone had to do it. Entering New York's hip-hop scene, Caprinha has become the first American label to document Germany's late 90s flourishing musical Left Bank. Sensibly, they commissioned a resident to do the soundtrack to **Deutscher Funk** (Caprinha Music, CA2008 CD). Bernd Friedrichs of Nonclass Urban Field, which means that unlike the vast majority of compilations, the choices are made on artistic merit. Workshop and Plasmus (with his superlative mix of the Bonanza's 'Wild Horse Annie') represent the post-Gangsta rap mambo department. House On Mars, FX Random, Biege and NUF himself rock out on assorted vintage drum machines, and the beats is topped up by General Magic & Pika, Pole and Pico II. There's even some prepared piano aspegos from experimental neotests: Kobai.

White Light, White Hat (Blanc Mergé Communications/BMCD001 CD) is a debut 'brevet in Manchester' by various Electro-heads who mostly want to be Audre to bad it hurts, though Junkyard Engineers' Chaffon-dated gangsta rap on 'Jamboree' is something to fear. But too much suffers from the current English disease: it just isn't funky. Time to take a lesson from the bedroom boleros of Slovenia, as represented on **Active Matrix** (Matrix Music CD708X102

CD), in which the dosed Detroit-Berlin Techno loop gets seriously Balkanised. These 12 tracks of Underground Resistance-style drum machine contraptions point up how far sensibilities have been dulled on London's champagne-drenched dancefloors by a surfeit of recycled Speed Garage. Give me Ham & Eggs' 'Amy Grant' over 'Gurman' any time. OK, so you may have gathered now we're on a world tour of the underground. **Underground Sounds Of America** (Studio K71 K1062 CD) tries to squeeze the US onto nine tracks, which seems a little half-assed. Tropic's 'Crimbo' could be Porter Ricks with Hausman guitars, Subtronic's 'Absolu Black' mix of Socoetie Continuum's 'Karo' (which must be at least two years old already) is needing drum 'n' bass. DJ Wally's 'Pasa Purple' is mid-range Hip-hop that's nothing to write home about. Even the redempting presence of Sub Dub and DJ Spooky can't stop this from remaining a coffee-table collection. Save your pennies for *Lo Recordings*: *Altered States Of America* (see review in Soundcheck).

Meanwhile, the Japanese Techno auteurs centred on the Sublime label continue to operate according to rhythm unheard in the West, and seem to be some of the only people experimenting with the microtonal tunings it's possible to obtain on synths. When

they're not privileging speed over funk, then they're chopping into the beat at weird, obtuse angles, creating a crabwise groove rather than straightforward surge. **Sublime The Adolescence** (Sublime SBLCD02020UK CD) puts these traits on show, with intriguing contributions from Sublime regulars Co-Fusion, Okidoki, SGB and Ken like wearing his Flame hat.

Vienna is one of the few places in the world where you're likely to hear the voice of William Burroughs piped through a PA in a public place, but that's just what happened last summer in the city's Heilmannpark during an electronic music festival led on by the Ritz organisation. Live recordings from that event are gathered on **Ritz Ritz** (no number CD) — no lies, just 19 short tracks by Alex, Huber, Roberg & Bauer, Card Duce, Farmers Manual, Ponnasol, EPY, Hecker, Fennex and various other names who haven't graduated beyond Austria's borders yet. Yet perhaps because it was taped live, it makes for the best and most representative compilation of Austrian electronics to date — and many have tried to document it without success. Only the Cheap roast is noticeably, inexplicably absent; otherwise, move quickly on this one.

There's a folkay feel to the sounds of resistance collected on **Angels Of Life In A Psychic Wasteland** (Esene Materials EseneW002 CD), flavoured with a healthy helping of musks from Scandinavia, Eastern Europe and Japan. The dense contains essays on recent industry conspiracy over CDs and the fate of Iran Jaga, although there's little obvious connection with the

music, which is united in refusing the consensus sounds and textures favoured by most styles of Western music. For some reason, that means much of it's got bangs and mandolins all over it, lending it a Holy Motel Rounders/Country Joe And The Fish ambience. But praise to Vas Defenders Organisation, Daniel Kuehler, Volent Graw Genshi, and to Eugene Chaboume's precocious lack for spectacularly running his protest song "Dirt".

For more and more indie rock labels, it's live desktop publishing never happened: their records look like something you picked up off the street. It's like post-the-panic trying to get into the cardboard organ pipe sleeve of **An Evening In The Company Of The Vespertine** (Vespertine 4 CD). Welcome to the art rockery: this is where that bloodless instrumentalism beloved of BOs labels like El, Cherry Red and early 4AD ended up. Gnar dedicate their 'Solilo' to Vin Rilly, and The Durrut Column are a keynote influence on several of the groups represented here. Butterfly Child, Quigley, Oronotaur (a former Pale Saint) and Mergers: I like Apenote, though, and not just because of their name.

Angelfood Electronics (Kake Hix KPR010 CD) gets off to a bad start by including abysmal Sheffield rocksters Hood come back when you've sucked your singer. This is a storage mix of truly appalling lo-fi tunes — by Rhubarb, Furry Things, Camptode and Thro Fourteen — and the specially commissioned, distressing which *Magnum, Plus* inside The Sun, Amp and Windy & Carl have no problem carving out. Ende of place goes to the massively undervalued Asura Plane. □

Label distributors & contacts

Contacts are given for labels without named UK distributors. Labels not named here should be available from specialist retailers such as Depth Charge, Piccadilly, Rough Trade. These, etc. In emergencies, contact local distributors such as Cargo, Greyhound, Harmonia Mundi, Imperius, Kudos, Pennine, RNR, SDR, Thesis, Vinyl, etc. NB Labels and distributors if you spot an incorrect or missing listing in this column, please contact The Wire pronto.

Alien through Cargo
Aphelion through SDR
Apple through Vinyl
Avant through Harmonia Mundi
Blanc Plastic Communications PO Box 38, Chorton DO, M21 9BN
California through Cargo
Canera Di Discaria through Cargo
Capitol Trip 3-17-14 Miami-Kowa, Edogawa-Koi, Tokyo, Japan
Chain Reaction through SDR
Charmel Plastic tel: 001 415 664 1029
Corpus Hermeticum through Cargo
Craft through Groove Attack, Germany fax 00 49 221 5105306
Creative Man Disc tel: 00 81 3 3442 3267
CD tel: 001 212 9419074
DC Recordings through Pennine
Disciple Global Public tel: 01 722

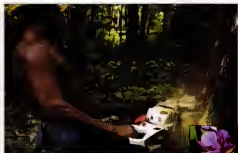
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Dis Diques Du Soleil Et De L'Acier fax 00 33 3 83 32 3047
DOV through Harmonia Mundi
Electric tel: 0181 964 0944
Esene Materials through Cargo
Electron Industries through Pennine
Enja through New Note
Enja Q through WEA
Fluid Dance fax 001 718 349 8512
Force Inc through SDR
For4 Ears Sternreichweg 16, CH-4452 Jorgen, Switzerland
The Foundry tel: 001 510 549 1645
Gnash 56 Rite Du St Antoine, 75012 Paris, France
Hanology through Harmonia Mundi
Househotel tel: 00 32 3 2540125
Hummingbird tel: 001 518 569 3971
III through Vinyl

Increasing through Pennine
ITN 52 Roebuck Road, Sheffield
Jaggarwar through Cargo
Juice Box through SDR
Kake Pix through Pennine, tel: 001 217 344 8609
KK through Plastic Head
Krunk through Cargo SDR
Ku tel: 00 39 2 72 0192
Lo Recordings through SDR
Matchless through Imperius
Matrix through Neston Medien-Vertrieb, tel: 00 49 69 811 792 5
Millie Planet through SDR
Mix Wack through A&R/PolyGram
Ninja Tune through Vinyl
NPK through Complete
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multi media

Scanning the interface of music and interactive media



Coldcut & Hexstatic

Timber Volumes 1 & 2
NINA TUNE ZINCORUM CO.

Around 5000 copies of every magazine you see on newspaper's shelves — this one excluded — will have been automatically pulped before the official start of the print run that's how many it takes to warm up a printing press. Set against this, *The Wire* has just been presented with a certificate to say that the number of trees "saved" by the last 12 months of conscientious paper recycling in the office totals... two. Faced with such facts, it's no wonder the gloomer futurists anticipate a move from the Age of Anarchy to an Age of Despair: the war against environmental destruction looks increasingly unwinable.

The two-volume CD remix release of "Timber," a track from Coldcut's 1997 album *Let Us Play*, explores precisely the Unwinability. On this release, the emphasis is on the audio-visual content, and it foregrounds this, the A/V mix of the Nina Tune collective, as generators of more resonant imagery than their club projections would suggest. Stuart Warren-Hill is the video artist behind the original video clip for "Timber," an unwinable piece of animated pelmex for which he asked environmental campaigners Greenpeace to supply film stock of deforestation in the Amazon jungle. The result, included in A/V format on these enhanced CDs, along with video remixed commentary by Warren-Hill from other video art collectives, thrusts your face what you really already know, but for all that it's no less a powerful piece of rhetoric. As ween, both invading and indigenous, hack and slash away at trees until

in repetitive loops, an enormous truck-mounted chainsaw makes short work of another logging king of the forest, and the haunting rooming-song of a woodcock wies mums over the top we see her distraught face superimposed over the dismembered lumber.

Stuart Warren-Hill admits the techniques used are not "radical" or tricky, although he claims to have worked his way further inside the video editing software Premiere than most of his contemporaries. "I worked on a system using Premiere as a sequencer, like Cubase," he says, "using it in a way it wasn't designed to be used." You can work out exact rhythms almost like a drum machine. It took me six months, because each percussive note in a video clip with sound. Emergency Broadcast Network have been a great inspiration: they've been designing their own HDI video samples, and we've done the same. Audio and video are inseparable now they're both digital, so they're all the same thing."

Sharp editing and headline-grabbing imagery are hardly new in promo videos — the difference here is that the track and its imagery grew up simultaneously, entwined and inseparable, taking all of six months to complete. Video edits were synced to the sound, allowing six strokes to fall exactly on each beat, and in 1-4-rapid succession, while the truck's bridge brings a new meaning to the term "chance saw." The technique was honed in the short films "Natural Rhythm" and "Fractal," short, stylish experiments with computer graphics and rhythm, ultimately unmemorable.

For the remakes of "Timber," footage was handed over to multimedia collectives Emergency Broadcast Network, Protean Vision Quest, Lucky People Centre and Clifford Gilberto. New Yorkers EBN were most fussy on the original with their saw-off drum 'n' bass remodelling. Their on-screen distortions appear to come from interference from the chainsaw motion themselves. "They did exactly what I hoped," says Warren-Hill, "which is to take video clips with their sound and completely rearrange them. They made a high energy breakdown, manipulating the sound, and then the video to interconnect with it: if they distort or delay the sound, they put distortion or delay on the video."

While Brighton outfit Protean Vision Quest leave the original material relatively undisturbed, Sweden's Lucky People Centre recast the piece in high-speed, adding their own sampled visual images of lush tropical rainforest intercut with sequences shot in Japanese urban spaces, clubs and railway stations.

Everyone reading this will have made their own individual contracts with technology and the corporations who supply it, and so have the creators of "Timber." They're aware of the roles involved in the use of cutting-edge, military-developed computer hard- and software, marketed globally by funding ad space in, you guessed it, more magazines. "The prospect of making people's awareness better, and maybe doing something about the environment using technology is very exciting," comments Warren-Hill. "I can change people's awareness — they might start recycling, or have some thought about the environment around their space — using my computer, then that's a bonus. Hopefully technology will be our saviour rather than our downfall."

Warren-Hill also offers a reminder that the electronic age may give way to a clockwork age, with Incon-powered radios and Apple Macs adding a reality. Until that time, his pelmex videos will have to ward up the burger-munching audiences of MTV and The Court Show.

BOB YOUNG

E-mail: hill@ninetune.co.uk
For more information, go to the Nina Tune website www.obsolete.com/ppe/

GO TO:



SiteSakamoto

www.sitesakamoto.com

Ryuichi's "person's" website — actually bottom-heavy with design (programming credits — includes with Java animations from the site page onward. Naturally, you can access Sakamoto's complete biography, discography and filmography here, but most revealing are Sakamoto's bookshelves, always guaranteed to roll the post pressures of snooping through someone else's library and bathroom into one), which cover familiar territory (William Burroughs, William Gibson, Anthony Arnaud), scientific esoterica, and a whole bunch of strange Japanese stuff. But the main reason for logging on will be to witness Sakamoto's regular "Netcasts" — lectures, interviews, and work in progress — if only to laugh at the folly of his "halal the world" orchestral piece *Descent*.

Microtonal Music Links

[www-math.cmu.edu/~jplatt/~jplatt/microtone.html](http://www.math.cmu.edu/~jplatt/~jplatt/microtone.html)

Now that the Tony Conrad box set has finally emerged (linking in the left, not to mention CDs re-release of their Harry Patch archive, clear definitions of Just Intonation and microtonality are in order. Step forward this promptly maintained page, the best jumping-off point to investigate this slippery territory. This armed, you can safely turn onto the sites dedicated to Patch, Lou Harrison and Charles Ives, honorary microtonalists Eric Dolphy, Captain Beefheart and Charles Mingus, and World Musics from China to Zimbabwe. Plus plenty of in-tuning tips for obsessives how a Neanderthal bone flute proves that it is the ut-most of bone flutes, and a history of Western tuning systems that could mean you'll never be comfortable learning to any post-Bach music again.

BOB YOUNG

on location

Going live: festivals, concerts, clubs in the flesh



Jon Rose



Theresa is go-go



GX Jupiter-Larsen and Rob Ostert



The Webcast studio



Here and above: Andrew Garton's SonarLive Digi

Recycling The Future

Austria: Vienna OK! Radio KulturaHaus

Recycling The Future celebrated the tenth anniversary of Austrian national radio's art project, Kunstradio (Art Radio), the foremost initiator of experiments which expand radio by linking into the World Wide Web.

Our arrival at the KulturaHaus — Austria's equivalent of BBC Broadcasting House — was transformed by a number of live installations (Bill Fontana had created an acoustic gateway to the event by suspending speakers outside in the trees, transmitting the sound of Vienna's underground canal system. Using 15 to 20 old radios from the exquisite collection of Gustav Paer on display in the entrance, Andrew Garton's SonarLive Digi set up a spatial sound field of radio static. Elsewhere in the building Sam Aunger's drone-emitting concrete sound cube R-Kunstradio

transformed the walk down a long corridor into a mood-setting experience, while as a diverting sidebar Allen Productions' *The Mix* electronically orchestrated ten food menus to play "I Can't Get No Satisfaction".

The festival kicked off with the marathon, ten-hour "Long Night Of Radio Art", featuring some 30 new works performed in front of an audience in the large theatre. These included a Theresa jam (featuring UK visitor Scanner) networked with Madrid and Moscow, Jon Rose rubbing two MIDI violin bows together, a Hürpöpel collage using sounds from a 60s German TV sci-fi series, and a transatlantic telephone conversation based on misreadings. One performance was even broadcast in two different versions over two different radio stations — and listeners were encouraged to listen to both stations simultaneously. Yet for all the tricks pulled over the course of this long night, little if anything stuck out as

memorable or artistically significant.

The programme of 20 seminars that followed over the next two and a half days brought much more in the way of substance. What with the art and New Media critics straying down the wild paths of cyberspace and speculative potholes of boredom, it was down to the artists to deliver the more interesting presentations.

These included Quebecois radio environmentalist Chris Hyman, whose intelligent musings on wireless issues were conducted from a table illuminated by a single lamp and covered with a small number of props, which set the late night radio mood. GX Jupiter-Larsen of The Haters gave a personal history of the work of contemporary noise artists that was full of intriguing detail. Sam Aunger and Rupert Huber presented sound, grinding excerpts from music originally designed to be compiled by Internet users. John Oswald pontificated about his audio-visual

manipulations of the filthy-rich darlings of the music industry, and Robin Rimbaud chatted about his mobile phone eavesdropping fixation.

One particular highlight of these weekend presentations was Helen Thorington's *Asht*, a performance networked with New York which managed to translate the dreamlike of radio to the new medium of the Net complete with sparse, evocative sound, 3D virtual reality imaging, and suggestive text shards. The fact that Helen's text cooked could have been dismissed as unfortunate, but in the end, judging by the way the ISDN lines also went down during the night, those technical hitches seemed symptomatic of the current fragility of electronics-based art.

There are still real problems with "Netcasting" via Real Audio. The number of potential listeners is limited by the small number of streams available, poor sound quality, and the expense of having to pay your phone bill while you listen (unless you live in the USA, that is). Previous pioneering Real Audio projects such as the worldwide networked event *Horizontal Radio*, involving some 16 countries over a 24 hour period, were largely symbolic, and propelled by a "because the technology is there" philosophy rather than any guiding artistic principle. Indeed, Kunstradio boss Heidi Grundmann has said that despite Real Audio's poor sound quality, "the real excitement is that something is being transmitted at all". Exciting for the theorists, perhaps, but not necessarily for the end-user. However, over the duration of the RFF event, there were signs that the consensus appeared to be shifting towards a more critical and content-oriented approach.

Critical assessments of "use value", however, are undermined by industry hype and economic reality, and Kunstradio is itself implicated in the big push towards technology during the "Long Night", listeners to the Austrian equivalent of Radio 1 were inspired to "Get yourself connected". But the fact that only ten to 20 per cent of the world's population has a private telephone puts fairly rotten of the Internet, is the greater view into perspective. As Moscow artist Alexei Shagun — whose contribution to the festival was to distribute free newspapers to people on the streets of Vienna — put it, "HFM", becomes just another language of exclusion.

From the point of view of an on-site delegate, as opposed to a listener at home or an Internet user, many miles away, *Recycling The Future's* sprawling 72-hour schedule — comprising an overwhelming amount of audio, theoretical and social information combined with a (somewhat discretionary) lack of sleep and an excess of alcohol and caffeine — was sufficiently destabilizing to

induce postmodernist anxiety attacks.

I wish I'd to Tom Sherman to provide a coherent overview of this diaspora of disorientation. He characterized Technoscience as the creator of dysfunction and fatigue through a barrage of layered information, with festivals like RIT providing a prime example. The individual, with nerves endlessly tweaked, is thus reduced to being the organic component in a home entertainment system. As an antidote, Sherman offered the hi-tech alternative of the Garsfield — a ping-pong ball sliced in half and placed over the eyes to provide an invariant field of light.

Reeling from the five jams between artists in different periods, the climactic all-night party in a nuclear bunker, and having no ping-pong balls to hand, I instead visited Martin Burkhart's *Unsum* installation in the pitch black of the long-abandoned basement rewards chamber. When the doorman slams the vast iron door shut, you are left in impenetrable darkness. Then the entire space starts to throb with a soundfield that surrounds and penetrates the body — a profound experience suggestive of infinity and the rearing of the self that *Recycling The Future* elsewhere failed to achieve.

PHIL GRIFFITH

The London cassette magazine *Audio Arts* is publishing records made at RIT in a forthcoming special issue. Tel 0171 720 9129 for details. For on-line documentation of the event, go to <http://www.audiartsmag.co.uk>

Tortoise/Mouse On Mars/Salaryman/Long Fin Killie

UK: London Electric Ballroom

In 1997 the toiles on rock's margins buffed their edges, dubbed in some breathing space and inserted enough kitsch samples to bring their experiments closer to mainstream acceptance. Upgraded to a 'proper' rock venue, this showcase amounted to a post-rock beauty contest of sorts. Could its four frontmen — in rock parlance — "but it live?"

Long Fin Killie's skewed pop should really have launched them on the road towards crossover success — except they opted to split in the weeks following this show. Apart from the name (Scottish anagram for a kind of fish) they had all great songs, a smattering of any sound-plate, and a formally open approach to material that bordered on the perverse — which is probably exactly why they remained a minority interest. Tonight they played with a bug-eyed intensity, though their electric instrumentation was necessarily pared down for live performance, with just a mandolin and singer Luke Sutherland's fiddle augmenting the standard guitar, bass and drums. The high points came when they looked into agitated, percussion-based grooves — rather like The Beatles, in fact. One guitar solo was so tongue-in-cheek historic that, if the budget stretched to it, its perpetrator



Tortoise: Chicago blues

would surely have been flying over the audience on wings, with flames shooting out of the back of his guitar. Ah, these ironies.

Salaryman also demonstrated how their laboratory pop could work well live. Even without the visual barrage of their bank of TVs, they were compelling, not least because of their retro vision of the future as a version of 80s synth pop. All three frontline members stood at keyboard consoles wearing skinny ties, while the drummer was surrounded by such percussion artifacts as synth pads and robo-toms. Their material has a malcontented futurism which, when amplified, becomes colossal. The trouser-popping sub-bass is an added bonus. The only downside is that the music is very much dominated by its structural and pitch patterns.

If this had been a contest, Mouse On Mars would have blown their fellow competitors right off stage. I had been told how good they were live, but somehow I wasn't able to reconcile those fevered, age-long-heavy reports with the group's recorded sound. Though excellent, their records call to mind how some revisionist critics viewed Mozart, a consummate, charming minimalist, but no more than that. Tonight they opened with "Su Shog" (also the opening track on their most recent album, *Autodidact*). The group have always been funky in a byzantine kind of way, but here the wiggly keyboard lines were underpinned by bass player Andri Torma and drummer Dado looking together like the funkiest rhythm section in the world. A flurry of drum fills towards the end of the song reminded you that this was definitely a live event and not a staged studio session.

The group then got seriously messianic, running through Deleuzian and Babelized towers of dub, with Jan St Wiener and Torma (also naming some strange no-making-gadgets) unleashing cascades of swirling electronics and lustrous blinks of abstract sound. These days, groups of all shades enormously name-drop dub, and some, like Salaryman, occasionally hint at its depths, but it's rare to encounter musicians who can actually play it. During a rampaging drum 'n' bass-like beat, a strange thought occurred: could Mouse On Mars be the quintessential 90s psychedelic rock group?

Follow that, if you can. And Tortoise do well, sort of. They take this stage to a very

enthusiastic reception wearing the same clothes they had on that morning. A lived point, perhaps, but it proves that, for them, the music is all that matters. It was a bizarre scenario, a packed elite crowd getting off on pitched, plangent chamber funk that would have been more at home in the Queen Elizabeth Hall. Swatches of electronics led into a truncated version of the group's most celebrated track, "Dye". By cutting it short, however, the group prematurely terminated what might have turned into an inspired journey. But Tortoise's restraint is their essence, and it was good to see an indie crowd baying their approval at the languid "Along The Banks Of River", which sat sounds like an Ennio Morricone Western soundtrack crossed with Gary Moore's "Rising Walkaway" minus the guitar solo.

The group premiered new material from the forthcoming 7th album, some of which sounded like a familiar, cool 90s deconstruction of 70s jazz fusion. Pleasant enough, but when you consistently find yourself wailing a group to shift up a gear, to release the power they obviously hold in reserve, it makes you wonder whether it's you or their who's missing the point.

PHIL BARRIS

The 50th Anniversary of Musique Concrète

France: Paris Radio France, Salle Olivier Messiaen

In the 1970s, François Bayle, a longtime collaborator of Pierre Schaeffer's, redefined musique concrète as 'acoustic music'. The Greek word 'akouma', meaning auditory perception, was used by Pythagoras to describe the novel teaching method he had developed — he would lecture to his disciples in the dark from behind a curtain, so as to enjoy their undivided attention. Likewise, acoustic music is a purely aural experience. The audience sits in front of rows of loudspeakers in the dark, totally immersed in sound.

Yet musique concrète hasn't only changed its name in the 50 years since its birth. Sophisticated computerized tools have flattened out the rough, unpolished textures of the early works, and the acoustic music of today bears little trace of the excitement

on location

and passion that informed its beginnings. Instead, as its new appellation suggests, this formerly revolutionary and controversial music has fallen prey to a growing academism. Hence my trepidation when I attended the opening concert of a season celebrating the 50th anniversary of musique concrète, held in the Olivier Messiaen Room at the studios of Radio France (the spiritual home of musique concrète).

The evening opened with an excerpt from a television interview with Messiaen himself, recorded in 1968, during which he stated that electronic music is the major musical invention of the 20th century and how it had influenced virtually all contemporary composers, even those who don't practise it. It was followed, appropriately enough, by *Le Violon d'Orphée* (1953), a piece by the most influential of all electronic composers, Pierre Henry. Over 27 minutes, the sweeping, expressive swell and exposed line of this first 'symphonic' musique concrète work demonstrated a rare unity and coherence. Its only weak point was the crude, exaggerated drama — to modern ears — of some of the vocal elements. In comparison, Christian Zanted's lauded 1997 composition *Anthem*, Les Vies De Pierre Schaeffer appeared self-conscious and laboured. A former pupil of Schaeffer's, Zanted offered up a smooth, polished collage of sounds that ranged from vocal excerpts to sounds resembling thunderclaps and rain, which mutated into a dense forest of crackles — and remained stolidly predictable and impersonal throughout.

The second half of the evening opened with two brief pieces by Schaeffer himself: rough, unlearned games from 1958 featuring bell-like sounds and ghostly wails and taps. As the applause subsided, the battery of speakers on stage were bathed with soft, atmospheric lighting, and factory noises, undercut by tinkling bells rose out of the silence. Son Wotse-Lumière *El Voyage Au Centre De La Terre* was the title of this busy modern-sounding 1982 work by François Bayle, which is lacking an unpretentious, subdued quality that is lacking in more recent electronic productions. In this piece, a sombre machine drone was overlaid with spiky, high-pitched sounds that evolved and mutated into jangling noises. Distant, wailing voices emerged out of nothing and were transformed into growls, roars and screams. Then the persistent whirr of the machines began again, only to fade out gradually. The same composer's *Horaceau De Ciel* (1996-97), piano sounds and a dusky blend of trills, glissando sounds and gliding strings, is was notable for its lack of bass tones. Still, treble sounds washed round the ornate hall, while the stage lights focused on different speakers, in turn prompting their myriad shades and angles. The audience watched elated as these surrogate players performed the final acts in the drama. Acoustic music may have succumbed to institutionalization, but these 50th anniversary celebrations show that it still has something left to say.

BARBARA KHAMAZ

print run

New music books: read, raved about, roughed up

Headcleaner: Texts For Collapsing New Buildings

By Blixa Bergeld

DE CEITALUS VS LAC POK 512 99

A squat, medical back encased in a green-glowing, seemingly radioactive lemniscate. Headcleaner herds most of Blixa Bergeld's "texts for collapsing new buildings" — in other words, the collected lyrics of Einstürzende Neubauten — into one restlessly energetic collection. Its organized-on-loosely thematic (rather than chronological) lines. Each grouping is divided by excerpts from an ongoing conversation between Bergeld and German journalist Harry Lachner, which provide an elliptical and frequently cursory commentary. The parallel texts (German and English, for the most part) heighten the academic tone of the project. There are even careful emendations (to Virilio, Baudrillard, Pöls, Artaud and Lewis Carroll, among others), but these concessions to scholastic convention are in the end little more than withered markers peeping quaveringly above the boiling flood waters of Bergeld's language. His words spring from an instinctive struggle for freedom, and despite the notes, the commentary, the rules — all unnecessary trappings of respectability — they still elude assimilation.

In the commentary, Bergeld notes, "for my generation, there was one sound that triggered off fear — there was one sound that could rip open the skies — it's started World War Three has broken out!" If Einstürzende Neubauten's music was in part an attempt to pre-empt, and so nullify, the roar of Armageddon, then Bergeld's language followed suit by immersing itself in purifying and transformative gouts of flame. This urge is most succinctly expressed in "Abblacken" ("Lorch"): "Let us free our souls of mould/And when the town is burning/Yes — those are our torches/Let us torch our souls."

This almost carnal yearning for immolation becomes a familiar Bergeld trope. And as he makes clear in the commentary, such volcanic imagery is an eruption of the impetus towards liberty. "I'm an old pyromaniac... the Americans have such a deep fear of fire like I've never seen anywhere else. They don't know how to deal with this element — the element of passion, to consume or to be consumed by fire — and so [for them] the idea of transformation also perishes... efforts to deprive man of fire are so totalitarian."

Naturally enough, Bergeld mostly dwells

in the furnace, and on those rare occasions when he allows himself a glimpse of post-apocalyptic liberty (as on "Der Neue Sonne"), he undercuts it with a final touch of Bettler cynicism.

When Bergeld is not scouring language with fire, he substitutes pressure and confusion, subjecting it to physics and alchemy, seeking always to make holes in the web, to bring into being new perspectives or conjure incandescent revelations. His texts make elusive, elliptical progress, rounding back on themselves, heaping pressure on words until they split like atoms. Tactics are multifarious, by turns devious and instinctive — puns, allusions, quotations, interpolations and (in

performance) screams, moans and deliberate obfuscation. The typographical treatment of texts like "Halber Mensch" ("Half Man"), "Ich Bin" ("It's Me"), "Schwende" ("Swindle") and "Sie" ("She") emphasize these tactics. Unreadable in a linear sense, they are baroque constructions that splinter meaning. With these elaborate structures, faithful translation becomes impossible — a note to "Schwende" admits as much — but the attempt brings into play another tactic against the limitations of language. This discovery assumes great importance in the determinedly multi-lingual Tabula Rasa texts. On "Die Intensivbeobachter" ("The Intensiveobservers") Bergeld substitutes microbial infestation and

the mystical biologist heart of the organism for Neubauten's earlier apocalyptic gestures and cauldrons of fire. The intermovers have in their lush intimacy inhabited infernal spaces, fractional gaps in experience — and Bergeld sends his words after them, seeking this new, microscopic release. "In the space/Of just one slipped beat of the tongue/There is big bang and total entropy — the whole scale/Of cosmic dimensions are falling/Out my mouth."

Complete fits with the nucleus of "Vanadium I Ching" — "Come closer beloved! Infect you!" Perhaps it was the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 that freed Bergeld from his earlier preoccupations — in any case, Tabula Rasa (Neubauten's first post-89 record) is an

Blixa Bergeld relaxes in the literary salon



explicitly sensual after he admits that "the whole album is in honour of the female creature." It would be a mistake, though, to see the *Tobacco Road* tents as a retreat to romantic rapture. In fact, they are packed with complexity, a whirling dance of discourses "Headkicker" itself is structured like an Ezra Pound canto, shifts in perspective and language perpetually unsettling the audience — especially when Bargeld suddenly introduces a chunk of "All You Need Is Love", or as he wryly describes it, "a hymn from the 60s by two well-known Liverpool composers".

Bargeld's language has always been political in that it's always sought to free itself from constraints and open up new possibilities. However it has also been dogged by the prospect of failure. "Zemstvo Zelle" ("Destroyed Cell") in particular sees the bonds dissolve, the cell walls collapse, and Bargeld unable to see or even imagine his liberty. On the most recent album *Eric Neu*, however, his words have become more explicit, more affirmative.

Headkicker is not necessarily an easy read. But there are thrilling and salutary experiences to be had from Bargeld's words in print — not something you can claim for many contemporary lyricists. And even at its most impenetrable, something in the quality of the language invites the reader to ask one question, a question that lies at the heart of Meibauer's 18 year project, and which is best expressed in the depths of "DMS-Wissenschaft" ("DMA-Heilswissenschaft"): "How do you actually learn to read?"

CHRIS SEARF

Sound And Light: La Monte Young, Marian Zazezela

Edited by William Dudgeon & Richard Fleming
DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS \$24.95

La Monte Young is the "father of Minimalism". Furthermore, according to Brian Eno, he's "the granddaddy of us all." By "us" he implies not just the obvious Minimalists, but also the likes of The Velvet Underground, Glenn Branca, Sonic Youth and any number of Ambient, jazz, rock and New Age musicians. La Monte himself has worked on the edge of all these fields, and also as a conceptual artist in association with his partner Marian Zazezela (Does the partnership make her the "mother of Minimalism"? Strange how male brains seem to come from mostly male, single parent families.) His diverse influences reflect simple essentials — saturation and duration — achieved through tuning systems of just intonation that turn out to be very complicated indeed.

An enduring flavour of the 60s lingers with Young — hippydom, gaudy, The Velvets and Transcendental Meditation — and he and Zazezela continue to live a 28 hour day. But his purposes have always been very serious, as Henry Flynt explains in his contribution to

this intriguing collection of essays. This first book on Young also covers the "lightworks" of Zazezela. Flynt was an early collaborator, and writes about their exploits from 1960-62. Dadaism served as a distraction, he argues in the famous "Piano Piece For David Tudor #1" (1960), the performer is instructed to "bring a bale of hay and a bucket of water onto the stage for the piano to eat and drink. The performer may then feed the piano or leave it to eat by itself. The piece is over after the piano has been fed, or after the piano eats or decides not to." But Young was unjustly "Forbowed", Flynt implies, much of his work was simply "standard art music, avant garde vintage." Flynt may not like *Forbowed*, but he can certainly be so-fused. In describing his own "concept art" he describes a concert held in his own head: "I documented the concert by writing a report of my mental session destroyed in 1962 when I renounced art."

If Dadaism was a sedition, Minimalism was La Monte's great evasion. His formative influences were the whistling of the wind through the cracks in the Idaho log cabin where he was born, and the hum of high-tension line slowdown transformers heard by standing near telephone poles. As a musical movement, Minimalism is premised on the response to small changes in slowly varying sounds. A Minimalist work, Flynt writes, "saturates the field with uniformity or monotony. The audience has to supply the psychological modulations." The aim was "the production of an altered state through narrowed attention and perceptual fatigue or saturation." But this isn't quite right — because there are changes that the audience gradually recognises. As Cage put it in an interview "After, say, five minutes, I discover that what I have all along been thinking was the same thing isn't the same thing after all, but full of variety."

If Reich, Riley and Glass repeat their material, Young sustains his in long-duration performances. But the more manageable 77 minutes of the *Grovehouse* recording — in its "melodic" version for eight trumpets — or *The Second Dream Of The High-Tension Line Slopdown Transformer From The Four Dreams Of Eric Neu* bears out Cage's statement. Change is also perceived through the installations that Young created with Marian Zazezela, where a continuous tone will alter within the listener's perspective as they walk through the soundfield. Village Voice critic Kyle Gann, in "The Outer Edge Of Consciousness", is eloquent about the "shimmering, melodious effect" "it is as though Young has composed the eternal harmonious scale and each listener composes his or her own private chart simply by moving around." In fact, Young uses many different tuning systems other than just intonation — but most readers will skip over Gann's mathematical analysis of them.

Just intonation is the key to Young's work (you unattended). The term refers to the variety of unequal tuning systems that accord with natural acoustics — the natural harmonic series. The artificial system of equal temperament, crucial to Western music since



La Monte Young feels a tune coming on

the time of Bach, allows modulation between keys by dividing the octave into 12 equal semitones. Just intonation, in contrast, uses unequal intervals. It was Tony Conrad in the early 60s who first put Young onto simpler ways of manipulating the harmonic series (The tapes of their subsequent work with John Cage have never been released owing to a legal dispute between them.)

Young delights in theorising about just intonation. It is needed "to access a music-induced psychological state, or 'drone-state-of-mind' — one must have the capacity for returning to the precisely same interval or harmony." Gann writes: He makes interesting contrasts with Cage. For Cage, "individual musical works are metaphorically excerpts from the cacophonous roar of all sounds heard or imagined." In contrast, Young "attempts to make audible the opposite pole: the basic tone from which all sounds emanate as overtones." But I reckon he's wrong to say Young stands for "being" and Cage for "becoming." It's relative, neither has much time for Beethoven, that master of becoming. Henry Flynt reports Young as saying: "Once I tried lots of material on a raw tuning. I liked it better than any [Beethoven] I had ever heard" (He was pretty rude about Cage, too.)

Flynt describes Young's surprising affections with jazz — he was a devotee of Coltrane's "sheets of sound", and they've been a jazz pianist, saxophonist and composer. Elsewhere, Terry Riley contributes reminiscences, and the late Robert Palmer writes about La Monte's former Bad Blues band, described by David Toop in *The Wire* 120 as a "turbulent soundtrack of a quarter" whose 1993 *Just Stripped* CD sounded like "John Coltrane's *Om* as played by mortally obese white people".

Young's works remain unpolished and mostly un-notated — he and his close collaborators are or are only performers — and his recordings are mostly unavailable. So *Sound And Light* is an important document about a strange and compelling, yet hardly documented figure in modern music.

ANDY HAMILTON

Available from AUP, ph: 001 609 655 8066

Mapping The Beat: Popular Music And Contemporary Theory

Edited by Thomas Swain, John Sloop & Andrew Herman

BLACKWELL, Hbk \$30.00pbk £13.99

This collection isn't entirely short on ambition, since its declared aim is to introduce an entirely new paradigm into academic studies of popular music. Hitherto, the editors claim, that field has been dominated by three useful but slightly tired approaches: sociological and economic accounts of the music business, close textual studies of sounds and lyrics, and ethnographic explorations of subcultural audiences. To that lot of how, what and who, *Mapping The Beat* wants to add the dimension of where — it seeks to deliver a cartography of sound, and an understanding of "how popular music constitutes a terrain of social and cultural identity that can be mapped in terms of spaces of noise and places of music".

This sounds promising and, much more crucially in the climate of contemporary academic publishing, it sounds fashionable. Today's theoretical writing is littered with spatial metaphors — border, terrain, zone, location, frontier — to the point where geography became as this might seem to those of us who associate it with school memories of Wellingtons and limestone) has become one of academia's newest disciplines. Unfortunately, *Mapping The Beat* is over-egged to surf the trend, passing itself off as a spatially centred collection when, in fact, only a third of its constituent essays follow that path. The others, which still adhere to one or more of the older methodologies listed above, thus seem stranded and abandoned by the editors' career-building, trend-scoring determination to join the space race.

Such abandonment is occasionally justified — Sheila Whiteley's piece on the sexual politics of late 60s counterculture music, for example, expects congratulation for discovering that Rolling Stones and Hendrix lyrics were full of reductively misogynist stereotypes of women

Imagine how excited Whitley will be when she discovers the similarly startling fact that bears shit in the woods? Elsewhere, essays on Hip-hop and Queercore punk suffer from overdoing on the strenuous rhetorics of 'resistance' and 'transgression' which so frequently bedevil Cultural Studies work on pop. It's really rather unseemly to witness aspirant academics carve out their own rung on the ladder of professional security by trumpeting about the recalcitrance of the dispossessed; it would be more excusable if any of them realised the irony of that contradiction, but in the anxiously humourless world of American higher education no element of self-reflexivity is permissible.

Hayes, the chapters in *Phasing The Beat* that stick to the spatial beat are much better – informative, thoughtful, intellectually flexible. Robert Hankin's essay on the geopolitics of MTV's move into the Central and South American market is a model of how to open up a topic for intelligent analysis, assisted by theoretical ideas but never enslaved by them. Hankin traces the cultural negotiations through which MTV originally sought to balance its construction of a 'continental' identity (MTV Latino being patterned after MTV Europe) alongside an awareness of different local and national musical traditions. 'Mexican music means little to Argentinian audiences, and vice versa. The only music that makes equal sense in Guadalajara, Lima and Santiago, however, is Anglo-American corporate rock, ensuring that the bulk of MTV Latino's output to the same old videos seen everywhere else, differentiated only through being introduced in Spanish. Local musics are marginalised, and the only ones that are not are the unifying factor – which is Nunka and Gue.' If *Roller and Ace of Base* – you can't go from an Aerosmith, which is really the centre of the channel to merengue or salsa, and expect not to have a train wreck.'*

Ramona Lusa-Schwetmberg, in the book's most telling and memorable chapter, looks at the uses and meanings of Tejano music in the cultures of Texas and Mexico. What makes her analysis really hit home is her anger at the little usage of spatial metaphors by fellow academics – as if metaphors were all they could ever be. As she writes from her heartland, "The borders of the world and of the nation borders are very real, concrete divisions that have material consequences as well as semantic subtexts – why else would American conservatives so rancorously call for the immigration, even expulsion, of Mexican immigrants?" Lusa-Schwetmberg carefully situates Tejano music, most especially the best, staller impact of the murdered singer Selena, in this tense shimmering context. This is mapping the best at its most productive, showing how music, people, more than any other thing, can be used to both reinforce and complicate structures of belonging, desire and both literally and metaphorically knowing your place.

ANDY WEIDMURST



This month's "zing-gin-ger" Kelli Malone

'zines

Biba Kopf trawls the big noises of the world's underground presses

The Auditorium #1

AUCHIOM, 11 EDITIONE VIA PAULLO 14, 20135 -

MILANO, ITALY
The central feature of this attractively presented A4-sized Italian language publication, printed on art quality paper, is a 20-page appraisal of "L'avanguardia musicale femminile", featuring articles, interviews and reviews of everyone from the cosy (Lucrezia Anderson) and the polkavocally vocal (Diamanda Galassi) to powerful instrumentalists like Ilse Min, Joelle Lissand, Kim Kashikashian and Zana Parks. Evidently, Patti Smith, featured in her own right up top in the magazine, is neither avant-garde or feminine enough to figure in such exalted company.

Blow Up #3

AA FAVINETA, 52042-CAPRIACE, ITALY
Subtitled "Rock and other contaminations," the subscription-only, Italian language *Storie* (Up shares) may an infection with *The Wire*, if not a like concern for readable presentation. They make a brave attempt at scaling Keiji Hano's ever growing discography and usefully include Italian translations of Hano lyrics for you to try out in your local pizzeria. The best of Neu!La Düsseldorf is neatly executed over two pages under the banner "Halo eccentricità." And here's a good place to catch up on Catalan performance group La Fura Del Baus given how they fall foul of Britain's on-exhausting fire regulations. Also featured: Paul Schütze, Spacemen 3, Bark Psychosis and Table Of The Elements.

Dddd # 22

HARVEY, MANOR PARK, HINSTEAD LYNDHURST
SOUTHAMPTON SO43 3PY (011)

The unlikely link between this cut 'n' paste 'zine and TV soaps became clear when I started worrying about editor Simon's drinking (rather than listening) habits. In other words I'm hooked, damn it. For the present, the drink still lubricates the wit and slapstick of the prose. A sole misperception about some

(unnamed) wire writer's solitary sexual habits aside, Dad's invariably accurate judgements are backed up with either slobbering kisses or well-aimed custard pies. Personally, we differ over the continuing validity of the British underground (now conspicuously absent here), but in the *CHR* axis of artists they've found a faction every bit as fractious and funny as themselves. Also, the only 97 round up to take pleasure in both Shazuo and Luther Vandross — and no, they're not "being fuckin' ironic or wacky or something unbearable!"

Muckraker #8

PO BOX 2571, MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55402, USA/US
TEL: 612 680 0000

When it describes itself as a nosecone. *Muckraker* means anything out of harmony with the entertainment industry, rather than wall-to-wall Menthol. That said, the features, and the enclosed 7" and "randomly selected" Pure CD fold spurring ugliness — MEV, Nihilist Spasm Band, Schimpflock, etc. (though the mothers who sired them no doubt beheld beauty in them). But the reviews sections and the info-loaded ads range further — into *improvised and outsider composers* like Cheliamene Palestine and Raymond Scott.

Nomad's Land #2

30 RUE DE LA COLONNE F-75013 PARIS, FRANCE
(752)

No grandiose sounding nose in the tasteful Noma's Land, a beautifully produced, BSW armenian cur photo-philosophical paper developed out of ideas that used to float in ambient and electronics at the beginning of the 90s. The ICA Hypersymposium featuring Eno, Scanner, David Toop, DJ Spooky and more (launched in The Wire 147) here are translated into French: Gilles Delaune is interviewed by Richard Pinhas (from 1977), and in the Kosmische section, there are French versions of previously published pieces by Stockhausen, Julian Cope, Robert Moog and David Toop. But even the publishers' high ideals and production values, you might expect something more timely and stimulating than a French language digest of familiar articles on overly familiar themes.

Octopus #1

47 RUE DE TROIS BONNES 75004 PARIS FRANCE
Featuring 104 pages of French language
interviews (Robert Wyatt, Ice/Techno Animal's
Kevin Martin, Arvo Pärt, Otomo Yoshihide)
articles (the 'other' Bristol of Third Eye
Foundation, Movelstone, etc) and an extremely
dense reviews section

Opprobrium #4

As an economic threat to American Cola domination, the Pacific Rim might be reeling from winter falls in exchange rates, but culturally speaking it is still a rising force in the world's underground. Thus, so NZ's *Apprentism* is well positioned to outline the agenda it has long been the best place for

gaining a deeper insight into leading Japanese artists, through Alan Cummings's articles and translations of in-depth interviews that first appeared in magazines like PSF's house mag, *G-Hoken*. This issue comes as an exhaustive, yet thought-provoking incomplete history of J-pop by Joe Horowitz and Heikōdani's T. Hikawa, plus a High Rise guitarist Munehiro Naito interview, complete with Cummings's tantalizing footnotes. These articles sit well beside pieces on Evan Parker, Tony Conrad, Brian Doherty and Neil Hamburger, while the tantalizingly complete reviews section is specially valuable for its coverage of underground NZ luminaries like The Dead C and Omei.

Resonance Vol 6 #1

UNT: I'm the Irish Probo, London's Number 1 TITS
LAWYER/STREET STATION, LONDON SE1 3NR 1ET
Absorbance sets itself a difficult theme – the
title 'Structure & Freedom' – only to bind
it open in order to render it very difficult as
the source of the misanthropic
ecstasy. They're fortunately blessed by a
team of musicians who can (mostly) meet, or
at least close the questions they open up for
the audience. I'm joined by James Berard
interviewing Buzi, Simon, Fel,
Chris Hayward, guest-artist Tim
Hodkinson and Phil England tackling the
zero loan form's only emptiness, emptiness
is only form'. Beehive drummer John
French on his former Captain, Howard
Mandel on John Zorn (from 1986), and the
sake of wonder (by Kenan Gendeb) that
makes you realize why Hitler Goebbels
elaborate rock necessity need not sound as
engaging as they need to be. I'm enjoying
CDs, I'm enjoying the live stuff from Janu
Dummesica, Fast, Altered States John
French and others.

Rubberneck #26

21 OCHAM DRIVE BASINGSTOKE, HAMPSHIRE RG22
6LT (FREE)

Produced by Wire contributor Chris Blackford, *Rubberneck* shamelessly privileges thoroughness over fun. Then again, Martins are also dry and are no less intoxicating for that. Blackford and his team indulge in some damn straight talking that renders the appeal of the likes of Rowa Saxophone Quartet and Saks Papadimitriou in words. It also carries an essay by Phil Durrant on the joys of improvisation, plus over 20 pages of reviews.

The Sound Projector #3

With no perceivable editorial policy save editor Ed Pisker's own tastes, *The Sound Projector* hangs together well in its made-in, black and white woodcut-styled cover. The older 'one eds get, the less mimulated they are by all the style wags that buffeted their youth, finally, they're content to let Prog rock sit beside Kosmische and Krautrock contemporary and editorial. Also: user friendly printers on UK Improv and estranged Minimalists (Noblock, Paleosine, Wadai), plenty on Japanese imports and more on Raymond Scott. □

new notes at a glance

information from SPNM

february

1 new line 98

Strauss arr. Schönberg.
Berg, Harvey, Schönberg,
arr. Webern, Winchester***
Walton, Stravinsky
De La Wier Parden, Beshel on
Sw. BW40 01 424 78749

2 BBC Symphony

Orchestra
Donatoni
Made Vale Studio, London W9
0171 765 2956

3 Joel Durand and the

Musical of Ruth

Crawford Seeger

Crawford Seeger, Erikson,
Durand*** Cowen
St Cyprian's, Glenavale St.
London NW1 01923 350854

5 SoundArt '98

Dillon, Les, Feldman,
White, Dunsant,
Improvisations
CH 0181 341 6073

Improvisation:

Tradition & Innovation

Fitch
GC

6 Vaganza

Ives, Wolpe, Feldman,
Carter, Nancarrow arr.
Mikshaoff
Haydn Gallery, University of
Newcastle NE1 0900 591596

Ethos Percussion

Group

Stratford, Cages/Hartman,
Garland, Miki, Ethos, Cages
WH

SoundArt '98

Forneyough, Cowell,
Brewis, improvisation
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Improvisation:

Tradition & Innovation

Fitch/Bendson, Runswick,
Rutherford, Cardew
GC

7 Improvisation:

Tradition & Innovation

McQueen, improvisation
GC

7 The Bach Choir

Fitz, Elger, Wilcocks*
RH

Branel Ensemble

Bornstein, Shostakovich,
Banbridge*** Copland
Victoria Rooms, Bristol BS1
0117 904 4255

Royal Liverpool

Philharmonic
Orchestra
Debussy, Satie orch
Debussy, Johnson, Ravel
Philharmonic Hall, Hope St.
Liverpool, LI 0151 709 3789

SoundArt '98

Cowell, Dillon, Fukushima,
Devadasy, improvisation
CH 0181 341 6073

8 Music Past &

Present (1)
Bismah, Ravel, Ziv
Gordon*** Vass, Brahms
Jackdaw Lane Theatre, 263a
Archway Road, London N6
0181 341 4421

Sue Anderson &

Nicolas Hodges
Finlayson, Grainger,
Connolly*** G Pritchard,
A Pritchard, Wood
Holwell Music Store, Oxford
OX1 0181 670 0962

Endymion Ensemble

Composer Choice -
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Cages, Schönberg, Brahms
arr. Woolrich, Mozart,
Wagner arr. 'Holloway',
Birtwistle, Schumann,
Woolrich*, Schubert,
Stravinsky, Gubinski*,
Monteverdi arr. Woolrich,
Janacek, Johnson*
PR

10 New World

Symphony
Orchestra
Ives, Barber, Debussy,
Adams
WH

11 BBC Symphony

Orchestra
Henne*, Shostakovich,
Mahler
RH

11 Vaughan

Williams and
Company (1)
Vaughan Williams, Read,
Mäner
JSS

12 Murray

McLachlan,
piano
McLeod
Concert Hall, University of
Glasgow G12 0141 359 8535

15 Tempo 2000

Schönberg arr.
Webster, Knight***,
Harrison, Bartók, Gaviola**,
Cui***
St Michael's, South Green,
London SE1 0171 256 1895

16 Endymion

Ensemble
Composer Choice -
Mark-Anthony
Turnage
Turnage, Krussen, Britten,
Stravinsky, Feldman
PR

18 Minnesota

Orchestra
Bartók, Mozart, Argento***
Bartók
RH

BBC Symphony

Orchestra
Ravel, Stravinsky,
Mugravage*** Strauss
RH

19 Antony Clare,

piano
Weir, Wilkinson*,
Ustvolskaya, Skerpton,
Clare***
BMC

Vaughan Williams

and
Company (2)
Vaughan Williams,
M Berkeley, Roads, Mäner,
L Berkeley, Walton
JSS

20 English Chamber

Orchestra
Bach, Oucharenko*, Fiesch,
Hendell
QEH

Music Projects/London

Lechmann, Kurtag,
Mason*** Matthews
Made Vale Studio, London W9
0171 765 5243

★ 21 State of the

Nation
Grieg, Gribin, Hills, Lynch,
Pew, Young, McGee***
Chase*** Adornworth***
Stollery, Phor, Barnett, Hyde,
Moore, Bruce*** Cooney***
Dudley Hughes***
Johnson*** Trainer***
Hesketh*** Pritchard***
Lunn*** Watkins*** Harry***
Ellard/Fowler*** Gornish***
Godmen*** Crow/Phor***
RH, QEH, PR

University of

Birmingham UMS and
New Music Ensemble
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Donatoni, Bero, Stravinsky
Great Hall, Imperial College,
Birmingham B15
0121 414 5791

Richard Casey, piano

Nielsen, Xenakis, Dudley
Hughes, Holt, Yeats*** Ravel
Music Department, University of
Manchester, Denmark Road,
Manchester M15
0161 275 4982

22 Music Past &

Present (2)
Ligeti, Toffanelli, Williams***
Mozart, Nielsen
Jackdaw Lane Theatre, 263a
Archway Road, London N6
0181 341 4421

25 Vaughan

Williams and
Company (3)
Vaughan Williams,
L Berkeley, Read
JSS

26 Psaupha

Clerke, Gilbert,
Malone*** Walsker,
Kennedy-French
Music Department, University of
Manchester, Denmark Road,
Manchester M15
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Sinfonia 21

Causson*** Harvey,
Anderson, Chin**, Berg
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South Kensington, London
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26 City of Birmingham

Symphony
Orchestra
Takemitsu, Lutoslawski,
Shostakovich
Symphony Hall, Broad Street,
Birmingham B1
0121 212 3333

Opus 20

Adams, Woolrich, Gough***
Stravinsky
St James's, Piccadilly, London
W1 0181 374 1527

new notes, the monthly magazine published by SPNM, is an essential guide to what's happening in new music. Events listed in full in new notes are summarised on this page. On February 21 SPNM is taking part in the London Sinfonietta's 'State of the Nation' - a lively, informal, provocative day exploring the rich diversity of British new music. We will join us? To find out more: T 0171 628 9696 F 0171 921 9628 E spnm@spnm.org.uk

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Britain Composers'
Conference
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Harris*** Read, Pliot***
Drew*** Knott*** Delby,
Perth-Evans*** Raymond,
Searle
Perthmouth Grammar School,
High St, Perthmouth PD1
01372 471193

28 City of Birmingham

Symphony Orchestra
Takemitsu, Lutoslawski,
Shostakovich
RH

KEY:

BH: Barbican Hall,
Silk Street, London EC2
0171 638 8891
BMIC: British Music
Information Centre,
Stratford Place, London
W1 0171 499 8567
CH: Conway Hall, Red
Lion Square, London
WC2
GC: St Giles'
Cripplegate, Barbican,
London EC2
0171 638 8891
JSS: St John's, Smith
Square, London SW1
0171 222 1061
RH, QEH, PR:
South Bank, London
SE1
0171 960 4242
WH: Wigmore Hall,
36 Wigmore Street,
London W1
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new notes

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WIRE

epiphanies

Biba Kopf has his life changed by a mysterious noise in the night

During one of their habitual tirades against the evils of Western music, party leaders in Beijing once unfavourably compared the oeuvre of Elvis Presley with the Chinese revolutionary hit "The Faeces Collectors Descend From The Mountain." Had the venerable cadres been more familiar with Yukio Mishima's startling literary debut, *Confessions Of A Mask* (1949), in which a four-year old Yukio recounted his sexual arousal at the sight of a youthful night-soil man coming down the slope, they might have been more careful about the selections for their youth-purifying revolutionary jukebox. For Mishima's encounter was, he wrote, a prescientment that "there is in this world a kind of desire like stinging pain." So who knows what unusual longings Beijing's injudicious cultural watchdogs unleashed in the hearts of young China?

A kind of desire like stinging pain. In musical terms such a desire manifests itself through disharmony, dirt in the ear, the spillage of noise. Pardon my pretension, but my Christmas holiday reading of *Deceitful Delectics: Sex, Violence And Nihilism In The World Of Yukio Mishima*, accompanied by a video of a childhood favourite Tom Sawyer — well, it was a holiday — unreeling in the background, triggered a memory of the first time I was really aroused by noise. It occurred during the following Sawyer scene: a barge loaded with a cannon floats downriver, ineffectually firing salvos with a view to raising the corpse of the hero, presumed drowned. The blast, the recoil, the sonic boom rolling across the surface of the water in this instance failed to bring up a blasted boat. But it did conjure for me the image of a six-foot plus British blond, with a voice as deep and resonant as that unfolding sonic boom. Inevitably, I heard it first through the darkness of a late-night John Peel show back in 1972, the voice naturally preceding the name of its bearer. It was shrouded in a dense fog of sound, consisting of depth charge bass and a knot of indistinct, yet squealing lead noises, which slowly and inexorably nocked across the song's watery base. Maybe I should have gotten out more, but back then I'd heard nothing like it, especially not the voice. Its very English baritone defied the period predilection for mid-Atlantic accents, just as the song cleaved itself of rock's usual drab, denim debt to 12 bar blues. I flipped on the bedroom light and carefully noted the details of this, to my fresh ears, unearthly performance. The singer? Kevin Ayers. The track? "Song From The Bottom Of A Well".

As an arousing icon of transgression Kevin Ayers hardly bears comparison with Mishima's night-soil man, but you have to remember things were more innocent

then. (Or perhaps it was just me — I can only imagine the jolting pleasures of coming of age to, say, a group like Coit.) Naturally enough I sought to repeat the experience and searched out the song on the LP, *Whitewashed Walls*. The anticipation was great but getting it home was an immense disappointment. Far from being an album spilling over with dirty noses akin to "Bottom Of A Well", it began with some orchestral idyll called "There Is Loving", followed by a collection of doxy ditties and a totally deft take on Velvet Underground's "Sweet Jane", called "Stranger In Blue Suede Shoes". I'my George Washington complex impels me to admit I made that last connection long after the fact. I might have shelved it in disgust, but economic factors dictated I couldn't afford to play the thing just once. So the true pleasures of Kevin Ayers's music surfaced slowly: his very Englishness (probably preserved by a childhood largely spent in some Far Eastern colony), his airy wit and lazy charm, which manifested themselves in the countercultural equivalent of a Noel Coward song, and a yen for experiment that dated back to his experiences in Canterbury during the early 60s, when he partnered Australian gonzo Beat alchemist David Allen in the first version of Soft Machine.

Indeed, the two finest pieces on Soft Machine's debut album are credited to Ayers. The first is a lengthy stilted waltz on a track with a passing resemblance to The Kinks' proto-metal masterpiece "You Really Got Me", called "We Did It Again". Legend has it that Ayers wanted the group to hammer away at the single, unvarying title phrase for as long as they could stand it, with no changes or embellishments, but the others buckled long before he did. The second is the great, cod-philosophical wake-up call "Why Are We Sleeping", in which he dramatised the teachings of his guru, Gurdjieff (in the 60s everyone needed a guru).

The fact that he quit Soft Machine after their first, by all accounts gruelling US tour with Jimi Hendrix was the first indication of Ayers's proto-slacker tendency to escape to the Balearics at the first whiff of the kind of serious hard work that prefigures commercial success. He continued to escape there throughout what you might charitably call a career of misadventures, throughout which the dividends became frustratingly

Blondes have more fun? Go tell Kevin Ayers

more erratic as it progressed to his present invisibility. Or you could read his laconism as his means of preserving the fragile, but very precious qualities that set him apart from his contemporaries. Though not without their strong moments, Ayers's later albums became more straitlaced than the usual rock expectations. But his first three are all wonderful mists of wistful, summery (no, I can't believe I'm writing this either), vaguely philosophical songs like *Joy Of A Toy's* "Lady Rachel", harder edged locomotive pieces such as "Stop This Train", and alternately hazy or Spike Jones-y experiments. In addition, they are about as far removed from rock as you could then stretch while still being somehow part of it. No real surprise, given that they are performed by bizarre ensembles of noted fringe players, including his former partners in Soft Machine — most persistently, Robert Wyatt — composer David Bedford (also responsible for Ayers's off-the-wall arrangements), saxophonist Lol Coxhill, and a very young Mike Oldfield, whose double tracked bass and guitar parts on the title track of *Whitewashed Walls* amount to the loveliest two minutes in the entire rock collection.

Whereas by current standards "Song From The Bottom Of A Well" now sounds positively creaky rather than Big Nose creepy, the *Whitewashed Walls* set remains my single most transgressive disc. Just watch your trends recoil in horror when they discover they're falling for an album with Mike Oldfield on it. □



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